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AS HE GLANCED OVER WHAT WAS PENCILED UPON THE PAPER, HIS INTEREST QUICKENED.

Sol Sharpe,

THE NEW YORK NIGHT-HAWK;

OR,

Piping the Hayden Case.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,

AUTHOR OF "SOL SHARPE, DETECTIVE."

CHAPTER I.

SOL SHARPE TO THE RESCUE.

"HELP! help! Murder!"

Clear and distinct rung forth the cry in accents of terror and anguish.

A lone traveler, leisurely riding along a shady and lonely mountain-road about sunset of a pleasant day in June, heard the cry, and instantly brought the handsome nickel-plated bicycle he bestrode to a standstill and dismounted.

He was a young man, not past twenty-one or two years of age, a trifle above medium height, slim, wiry, and muscular, and evidently possessed of unusual quickness of motion and strength.

His features were well cast, and their habitual expression, together with those of his flashing eyes, betokened keen intelligence. His face was clean-shaven, his brown hair close-cut, and in his regulation bicycle suit he made a rather dashing appearance.

The sun was just sliding below the horizon line, and all nature seemed pervaded with silence, when the piercing scream for help attracted his attention.

The road he was following was shaded on either side by forest, and it had been over a half-hour since he had passed a habitation.

Naturally, then, the cry was somewhat startling, coming as it did, from only a few yards away.

"Well, I'll be blamed if I don't have to investigate this cry for help!" the young bicyclist exclaimed. "Some one is being foully dealt with, judging by the words."

He quickly wheeled his machine to one side of the road and leaned it against a tree.

Then he plunged into the forest.

He directed his course toward the spot from whence came the cry for help, and his flying leaps soon brought him to a place where the disturbed leaves under foot gave evidence that a struggle had taken place there.

Pausing, he listened intently.

Some little distance ahead he heard a loud thrashing in the underbrush, but the sound gradually receded rather than drew nearer.

Waiting no longer, he plunged swiftly ahead, and in almost less time than it takes to tell it, reached an open glade, across which a burly man was running, carrying in his arms the body of a struggling girl.

Increasing his speed, the pursuer bounded on, at the same time drawing a revolver.

"Halt!" he yelled, sternly, "or by the jump-in' Jericho I'll put a bullet through you!"

A defiant laugh was the only answer as the fugitive sped on.

He was a large, powerfully-proportioned person, with a shaggy black beard, hair to match, and a complexion swarthy as that of a half-breed.

But although a swift runner, he was no match for the agile young knight of the bicycle, who gained upon him at every leap, and was fast closing in on him.

At last seeing that he was sure to be overtaken, unless he ridded himself of his incumbrance, the ruffian dropped the girl to the ground, and then bounded on, faster than before, soon disappearing among the trees at the further side of the glade.

Not, however, until he had received a bullet from the pursuer's revolver that caused him to go lame.

By the time the bicyclist reached where the girl had been dropped, she had regained her feet, and he beheld a most charming girl of some seventeen years, attired in an airy dress of white, that corresponded well with her creamy complexion and golden hair.

"Oh, sir!" she cried, as her rescuer drew near, "how shall I ever be able to thank you for coming to my rescue!"

"No thanks are necessary, miss," was the reply. "I am only glad that I chanced to be near enough at hand to overhear your cry of distress. Who was the brute attempting to carry you off, and what was his object?"

"His name is Dave Dolan, sir, and he is a dis-solute wretch who haunts the mountains around Pottsville. Some years ago he belonged to the Molly Maguires, and since that time he don't dare to show himself in any of the coal-mining towns, for a reward is offered for his capture, and he is wanted for a number of crimes. I was hunting wild flowers in the woods when he suddenly pounced upon me, and was carrying me off, as you have seen. His object I do not know. Oh! sir, I am very grateful to you—very grateful, indeed, for Heaven only knows what would have been my fate had you not come to my rescue."

"Don't mention it, miss—don't mention it. As I said before, I am only too glad I came in the nick of time. May I ask your name?"

"Certainly. I am Capitola Carlisle—or, rather, Capitola Hayden, that having been my poor father's name, sir. I am the adopted daughter of Chet Carlisle, who was papa's bosom friend, and hence I bear his name."

"Ah! I am glad to know you, Miss Carlisle. My name is Sharpe—Solomon Sharpe, of the New York detective force, at your service. I am now taking a summer 'outing' through the country on my bicycle for the benefit of my health. I have got rather out of my course, however, I fear, and if you can direct me so that I can reach Pottsville to-night I shall be under many obligations to you."

"Why, sir, you are on the mountains, and by the irregular course of the highway, it is over fifteen miles to Pottsville, and the road is very lonely and unsafe at this time of year, especially at night. You know there are so many tramps and toughs around. Really you must not think of attempting to reach Pottsville to-night, sir, for I shall insist upon your coming to our home and spending the night. Guardy will be pleased to see you, and will reward you for rescuing me."

"Not if I know myself, he won't!" Sol smiled.

"However, Miss Carlisle, being somewhat fatigued, if you are sure I will not discommode you in any way, I will accept your kind invitation."

They left the glade and returned to the highway at the point where Sol had left his bicycle.

He did not mount the machine, but wheeled it along beside him, as he accompanied Capitola toward her home.

As they proceeded they chatted pleasantly, and Capitola related something concerning her own life.

Her father had been, all his life, a sea-faring man, while her mother, up to the time of her death seven years before, had resided with her only child at Black Diamond Villa, some twenty miles from the flourishing coal city of Pottsville, Pa.

A few weeks before the death of Mrs. Hayden, her husband had returned from a voyage, bringing with him a large sum of money, the profits of a three years' phenomenally successful cruise.

After Mrs. Hayden's death, however, the old longing for the sea again possessed him, and nothing could deter him from going back to his old life.

But, before going, he made provision for his child in case he never returned.

An old bosom friend of his, Chetwynd Carlisle, was placed in charge of Black Diamond Villa and the farm that surrounded it, and was made Capitola's guardian.

Mr. Hayden also placed under Carlisle's control, twenty thousand dollars in money, to be invested in paying securities, the interest thereof to go toward the support of Capitola, Chet Carlisle and his maiden sister, Matilda, and to give Capitola a good education.

Provisions were also made, that when Cap, as she was familiarly known, should reach the age of seventeen and one-half years, the villa and farm was to be sold to the highest bidder, and the proceeds to be equally divided between Cap, her guardian, and his sister, at which time the former was to be free to do as she pleased, except that she was not to come into possession of her twenty thousand dollars until she was of legal age—twenty-one.

Papers making the sale of the Black Diamond estate positive had been drawn up and signed, and then Mr. Hayden bade his child good-by and departed.

He had never since returned.

Two years before our story, news had come of the foundering of the Mermaid, Mr. Hayden's vessel, off the Bahamas, and the loss of the whole crew.

"And, oh! sir," the pretty heiress added in conclusion, "Guardy tells me the old farm must be sold—the dear old home in which I have al-

ways been so happy. Of course the farm rugged and will not bring very much, but the words can ever express how dear it is to me."

"That is too bad!" Sol returned, touched by the sadness of her tone. "Is it to be sold very soon?"

"Oh! yes, sir. The papers have been circulated for over a week, and the place will be sold to-morrow!"

"Indeed? But, is there no way you can have it bid in, so that it will still be yours, Miss Hayden?"

"How can I? Guardy has the management of it all, and being yet a minor I cannot act in the matter. Besides, I have no money."

"Why, you have twenty thousand dollars!"

"I cannot touch it until of age. I have never seen only a little of the interest of it. Guardy has had the whole matter in charge, and he says the money is all in bonds that mature shortly after I am of age; though for that matter, I don't know much about bonds and such things."

"Does your guardian want the farm sold?"

"No, I don't think he does, if he would tell the truth, but that old spitfire of a sister of his says it must be sold, as she is bound to have her share; and she just bosses her brother around as she pleases, and he dares not say his life is his own scarcely."

"Indeed? Well, truly, I am sorry that you are in trouble, dear lady," Sol said, thoughtfully. "Haven't you some friends who would help you out?"

"Friends! Alas, I have but few, and they are too poor to help me out. Those who have any means, sir, are hard, grasping, avaricious people, who have no mercy for the helpless, but rather seek to take advantage of one's helplessness."

"That's so, the world over," Sol said, grimly. "How much do you expect the homestead will bring?"

"I've no idea. You know it has for years been imagined that there was coal and iron under our farm; and now that every one is aware it must be sold, there may be considerable competition no doubt. But, there is one man who will have the place if he has to pay a fortune for it!"

"Who is he?"

"Colonel Cook—a man I loathe and despise. For the last two years he has sought to win my favor, and induce me to marry his son, who is a New York broker—at least, so the father claims. Then seeing there was no use in that, he proposed himself, and has persecuted me with his attentions ever since, until he has fairly driven me wild."

"He is a bold, bad man—a scheming villain, cloaked in the garb of a gentleman, and I really abhor him. For years, I am satisfied, he has been laying plans to get hold of Black Diamond Farm and my money, and Heaven only knows, I fear he will yet lay a snare and succeed!"

"Not while I'm outside of my pine box!" Sol Sharpe declared, earnestly. "I'm a detective, Miss Capitola, and when in the metropolis, I'm known as the New York Night-Hawk. You've interested me in your case, and I'll tarry in this neighborhood a few days, and, if I can, will prevent your losing your homestead!"

"Oh! will you, sir? May Heaven reward you for your kindness then, for I feel that you will be my friend in this hour of trouble!"

"You can bet I will!" Sol hastened to assure clasp the hand she extended to him warmly.

Just then they rounded a turn in the rugged mountain road, and came in sight of Black Diamond Villa.

CHAPTER II.

THE COLONEL.

BLACK DIAMOND VILLA, as Capitola had called her mountain home, was situated on a great bluff overlooking the famous Schuylkill Valley, and the city of Pottsville and adjoining hamlets, far, far below.

The view was a grand one, indeed.

The villa itself was a roomy structure, surrounded by pretty grounds and plenty of shade, and back of these grounds across the highway, were perhaps fifty acres of rugged farm land, plentifully dotted with stumps and rocks.

Beyond was a wild, bushy landscape, not particularly pleasing to the eye; but from the front of the house which faced toward the valley, the scene was most magnificent, either in winter or summer.

Besides the villa and well-kept grounds, there was a good carriage house and other buildings, and the whole was surrounded by a nice fence.

"There! that is where I live!" Capitola exclaimed, when she and Sol Sharpe came in sight

of the house. "That's the old home where I was born, but which, I fear, I must soon leave."

"Don't fret about that," Sol replied, reassuringly. "If I can't help you out of your difficulty, Miss Hayden, it will be something queer. I'll dismiss all worry from your mind and be as easy, for if the farm is sold to-morrow, you will be the owner!"

"Oh! sir, do not give me false hope! How can you save the old homestead?"

"Wait and see," Sol replied, with a smile. "But do not mention to your guardian having said anything to me of your affairs."

"Oh! certainly not."

When they reached the grounds, Capitola opened the gate and led the way up the gravelled walk to the piazza, Sol and his bicycle bringing up the rear.

Seated upon the piazza in a great easy rocker, Chet Carlisle was engaged in smoking his pipe, while, near by, his sister was engaged in pulling some strawberries for supper.

Carlisle was a man of sixty years, with a large round face and head and snowy hair, while his lower proportions were decidedly aldermanic. His face was red, denoting an excess of blood in his system, but the blossom on the end of his nose probably suggested that he was a man who was not in the habit of going thirsty.

His habitual expression was pleasant, and gazing at him, one would have formed the opinion that he was a person who believed in taking things easy instead of borrowing trouble.

Matilda, his sister, was forty-six and right the reverse of Old Chet, as he was best known by name.

She was tall, large-boned, and thin as a rail, with a sharp-featured, vinegary visage, snappish black eyes, and black hair, the latter, however, being a wig; for to tell the truth, Matilda had not yet given up matrimonial aspirations, and claiming to be only thirty-five and having a bald spot on top of her head, she was obliged to resort to artificial covering.

Both Old Chet and Matilda viewed the approach of Cap and her guest in considerable surprise, especially as neither of them had ever seen such a contrivance as a bicycle, and wondered what kind of an infernal machine was being brought into their midst.

"Capitola!" Matilda spoke up, in a shrill, discordant voice, as the twain drew near the veranda, "who is that you've brought here?"

"A gentleman from New York, aunty," Cap replied, running up the steps. "This is Mr. Sharpe, from New York, who, having become belated, would like to get a night's lodging."

"From New York, hey?" And Matilda pursed her thin lips and surveyed Sharpe disapprovingly. "That's where all blacklegs and burglars come from. So, miss, you can tell the man he can't get lodging here!"

"But I sha'n't!" Cap said, stamping her foot. "Mr. Sharpe saved my life, and is a gentleman, and he is my guest. So, now! I'm mistress of my home for this once, if I never was before, and may not be hereafter!"

Matilda glared at the girl in angry amazement.

"Capitola Carlisle!" she cried, "how dare you ass me in this manner? How dare you? Chet-tynd, do you hear that girl?"

"Yes, I hear her!" Carlisle replied, with a frown, "and she's right, too. It's the last night we'll stay in the old home, and I don't blame her a bit for asserting her rights. Come here, Cap; an' you, too, stranger, an' take a seat. I'm powerfully glad to see you if you saved Cap's life, and I want to hear all about it."

"Excuse me, sir," Sol said, "but I would prefer to retire if my presence is objectionable to the lady. Miss Carlisle extended me an invitation to spend the night here, or else I should have gone on to Pottsville."

"Never mind Matilda!" Old Chet said. "I'm axin' ye, not her. Come right along and take a cheer and never mind her. She's allus had her way, an' now it's time for me to have a say. Come along, stranger!"

"Of course you will," Capitola added, running down the steps and taking Sol by the arm. "I'd not think of letting my brave rescuer be cared away. Come right along with me, and I'll tell Guardy all about my adventure!"

"Yes, you might as well come in!" Matilda said, snappishly, "since they've both asked you. If the silverware is all gone in the morning it won't be my fault!"

"I beg your pardon, madam, but I'm not a rook!" Sol retorted, flushing.

"There! there! Don't mind her, for my sake!" Cap said, coaxingly, and she led Sol to

a seat on the long settee near the corpulent Mr. Carlisle.

Matilda immediately arose and flounced into the house in high dudgeon.

That her authority should be ignored was galling in the extreme.

"Now then, Cap, tell us all about what's happened," Mr. Carlisle requested.

"All right, Guardy," and Capitola took a seat beside the detective. "You see, it was like this: After you went into Pottsville to-day, I took it into my head to go out in the woods and see if I couldn't find some wild-flowers. Well, I wandered a good ways without finding anything I wanted, and finally getting tired, was returning home, when I was suddenly pounced upon by Dave Dolan, who picked me up, and ran away deeper into the forest!"

"Dave Dolan!" the old man gasped.

"Yes, Dave Dolan, the outlaw. I screamed for help, and this gentleman came to my rescue. When Dolan found he was pursued, he dropped me, and made his escape!"

"But not until I put a bullet in his leg!" Sol added, with a smile, "just to blase him, you see."

"Well! well! This beats the Old Harry!" Mr. Carlisle said. "What Dolan could want with you, Cap, is more than I can understand. However, stranger, I'm mighty thankful you were near at hand, for the Lord only knows what Cap's fate would 'a' been had Dolan succeeded in carrying her off."

They chatted pleasantly for awhile, and then Old Chet was forced to give vent to his curiosity concerning Sol's two-wheeled vehicle.

"I dunno as it's any of my business, stranger, but what in thunder d'ye call that air machine you brought along with you?"

"That?" and Sol gave the polished "machine" a loving glance. "Why, that, sir, is my bicycle."

"Your bicycle? Now, blast me if I know any more about it than I did before."

"Why, you see, it's my horse. It never eats nor drinks, and yet is always ready to go. Do you want to see me ride him?"

"What! ride that thing?"

"Certainly. I'll show you how."

And, leaving the piazza, Sol mounted the cycle and proceeded to ride around about the lawn, at the same time riding in several different positions.

While he was thus occupied, Pat Murphy, the man-of-all-work about the place, made his appearance on the piazza.

For a couple of minutes he stood watching the spectacle in open-mouthed amazement, and then suddenly broke out:

"Be jabbers! an' phwat the divil d'yez call that, now?"

"Why, Pat, that's a horse!" Capitola laughed.

"A horse, is it? Well, by me sowl, that's the strangest sort av a horse I ever saw. An' phat's that a-ridin' the horse?"

"Why, that's a man, of course, you stupid!"

"It's a mon, is it?" quoth Pat, relapsing into silence, and leaving the piazza to get a closer view of the wonderful machine and rider.

Sol finally terminated his evolutions and dismounted from the cycle; then Pat approached and proceeded to feel of his arms and legs.

"Begorra! an' it's alive yez are, afther all!" he exclaimed.

"Why, Irish, did you think I was dead?"

"Howly cats! I tho't you was the divil, himself, I did. Phat you call that?"

"A bicycle, of course."

"A bisookle, is it? Now, phat in the Vargin's name is a bisookle?"

"Why, a machine to ride on. Do you want a ride?"

"Do I want to ride? Well, I should say I do not want anything av the kind. Phat yez take me for, anyhow? But, say, mon, whin did it happen?"

"When did what happen?"

"The foight yez had wid the dog, to be shure?"

"Why, I've had no fight with a dog."

"You have not?"

"No."

"Thin, by me sowl, how did yez git the inds of the breeches chewed off from yez? Faith, an' yez look like a Sligo jig-dancer."

Sol explained the convenience of the abbreviated trousers, and then leaning the machine against a tree, rejoined Mr. Carlisle and Capitola.

"Well! well! That aire masheen beats all I ever hear tell of!" the old gentleman asseverated. "I wonder what next they won't git up? When I was young, common folks had to go afoot, while them as could afford a horse were 'counted purty well to do."

After a while supper was announced, and after it was partaken of, Sol was conducted to the parlor by his young hostess, who entertained him with a few selections upon the piano, after which they took seats by an alcove window, overlooking the valley, and engaged in conversation.

They were thus engaged, when a horseman came cantering along the highway, drew rein at the lawn gate, and beckoned to Pat, who was still preoccupied in inspecting the bicycle, to him an incomprehensible curiosity.

The horseman was a tall, powerfully-built man, of military bearing, and was fashionably attired.

His face was large and stern in expression, his eyes of gray color, and rather sinister in their glance, while his hair and bushy side-whiskers were liberally streaked with gray.

A shiver passed over Capitola as she saw the man.

"That is Colonel Cook—the man I so fear and abhor," she said. "Oh! I do wonder what can bring him here to-night?"

"Do not fear him, Miss Capitola," Sol enjoined, reassuringly. "Remember you have a friend in Sol Sharpe. Does this Colonel Cook reside and own property around here?"

"No!—that is, he owns no landed property that I know of. He spends a great deal of his time in Pottsville and adjacent mining-towns, you see, and is reputed to be worth over half a million of dollars in money."

"Indeed?" and Sol smiled significantly. "He is reputed to be, eh?"

"Yes. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, for no reason in particular, except that I fancy I have seen the man before, in New York!"

"Oh! that is not unlikely, sir. He goes there quite frequently, I believe."

"How about your Irish servant, Miss Hayden? Is he honest?"

"Indeed he is, sir! I'd trust him with any amount of money, or anything else. Pat is rough and unpolished, but he is a real diamond for all that, and is my true friend. He would stick to me till the last."

"I have to congratulate you, then, on possessing so trusty a friend. Ah! I see your guardian has joined the colonel at the gate."

"Yes, and they are in earnest conversation. I cannot imagine what brings the colonel here to-night. Something connected with the sale to-morrow, no doubt."

Sol Sharpe arose and put on his hat.

"If you will excuse me a little while, Miss Hayden," he said, "I think I will take a little spin up the road. When I return, I shall have some plans, and mayhap some news for you. Avoid seeing the colonel, if possible, and, above all, sign no papers until I see you."

"Tell me this. In case my return should, by any unforeseen accident, be indefinitely delayed, and should it become necessary for you to fly from here to safer quarters, have you the money to defray your expenses?"

"Oh! sir, you frighten me. What do you mean?" Capitola demanded in alarm.

"Don't be frightened! I only say if anything should happen, not expecting anything will happen, you understand."

"No, Mr. Sharpe, I have no money. Guardy has been very careful not to give me more than a couple of dollars at a time, the last few months."

"Ah! Well, we'll see about that!" Here, Miss Capitola, is my New York address, in case any unforeseen circumstances should prevent my return here, and here is sufficient money for your needs until you get to New York. Now, pray accept it, and if I don't, sooner or later, get you out of all your trouble, my name is not Sol Sharpe!"

He tossed both the money and the card into her lap; then catching her hand, and raising it to his lips, he turned abruptly and left the room, leaving poor Capitola both astonished and alarmed.

"Oh! what terrible thing is going to happen?" she murmured. "Surely, something, or else he would not so suddenly take his departure. Oh! why has he so deserted me, when I had just begun to take so much interest in him? He is so noble and so kind, and he said he would be my friend. But, his sudden going seems very strange to me—very strange, indeed!"

CHAPTER III.

SOL PLAYS EAVESDROPPER.

WHEN Sol Sharpe left the villa and approached his bicycle, he found Pat Murphy again inspecting the machine.

"Well, Pat, what do you think of it?" he asked, pleasantly.

"Begorra! it's the devil's own contrivance," Pat replied.

"But, it's as handy as a pocket in a shirt. Now, Pat, I want to say a few words to you. Do you know there's the dickens goin' to be to pay here to-morrow?"

"Faith an' I know it only too well, sor, an' it's sorry I am for the young lady!"

"So I presume. Capitola tells me you are a true friend to her!"

"Did she say that?"

"She did!"

"May the Lord bless her purthy face, and may the devil sthape me in bad whisky ef she ain't right, sir. I'd cut off me own big toe, if it would be doin' her any pleasure."

"Exactly. Now, see here: This place is to be sold to-morrow."

"Yes. The ould place is got to go, so the old mon says."

"Perhaps not. I must go away and may not be here at the sale. You must buy the place!"

"I must buy the place? Phat the devil yez talkin' about, to be shure? Have ye gone crazy, ontirely?"

"Not a bit of it. You must buy the place, no matter what is bid for it!"

Pat burst into a roar of laughter.

"Arrah! an' I know'd it!" he said. "The bisookle have turned your head, so it has! Why, ye bloody spalpeen, if holy wather was sellin' for a cint a barrel, shure I couldn't buy a drop!"

"Nonsense! I do not expect to use your own resources. Here is a package of money—more than enough to buy two such places. Spend every cent of it, but what you get the farm. Do you hear?"

"Begorra! an' I do."

"Well, when the farm is sold to you, see that you get a clear deed; then you and Miss Cap are to come direct to New York. She has my address, and you will have no trouble in finding me. Now, in case I do not get back, can you attend to this for me?"

"Begorra, sor, I can, and I will! An' it's thankin' ye I am for the young mistress, too. Shure, I'll do iverything just as you say, sor, for, though I have the looks av a Corkonian bog-trotter, I have a dacent bit o' common since for a' that, an' it's a could day when Pat Murphy gets left."

"All right! I sincerely trust so. And, another thing:—keep a close watch over your mistress, and see that no harm comes to her. I believe that yonder man, Colonel Cook, means her evil. So keep a close watch on everything that goes on. If you fail in this, you may see great ill come to the young lady."

"Sure's my name is Pat Murphy, I'll be the sl'apeless sintry over her. I have an illigant pair of fists, and, begorra! I'll knock smithereens out o' ther first spalpeen as dares to try to harm the young mistress. Hi! hi! before yez go!" for Sol was preparing to mount his bicycle—"I want to know what your name is."

"Sol Sharpe, *detective!*" was the reply, as Sol took his seat and sent the bicycle rolling away.

The gate was open, and he rode out of the grounds rapidly.

As he passed the colonel he gave him an inquiring stare, which was returned with interest, the colonel evincing some surprise and consternation.

Striking the main road, the detective took the route leading away from Pottsville, instead of toward it.

He did not ride rapidly now, but seemed inclined to proceed at his leisure, and, although his face wore a puzzled, anxious expression, his lips gave no explanation of what were his thoughts.

Darkness was now beginning to settle over the mountain landscape, and when he was about a mile from the villa he dismounted and lit the lantern in front of his wheel so that he could see the road better.

He had hardly finished this operation when a woman carrying a basket came along the road and passed him.

He saw her face distinctly, and, involuntarily, an exclamation broke from his lips.

"Mott Street Mag, as I live!"

She gave him a startled glance at the mention of her name, and then took to her heels and ran as fast as her feet would carry her.

Sol Sharpe gazed after her a moment in great astonishment.

"Well, I'll be thumped!" he ejaculated, "if this ain't a surprise! That's New York's most famous sneak-thief and confidence woman,

Mott Street Mag, who broke jail last winter. I wonder what the dickens she's doing up in this wild region?"

He sprung to his seat on the bicycle, and propelled it along rapidly, but failed to overtake the woman who had disappeared in the thickening gloom.

A little further down the road he saw a shanty standing in a clearing some distance away with a light burning in the single window.

"Perhaps she lives over there," Sol muttered, "and I'm going to find out. But not now. I'll ride down the road a half-mile further, secrete my wheel, and return in a roundabout way. That will throw off suspicion that I have any intentions of trying to find her, in case she is watching for me."

He struck up whistling, and rode on past the clearing, without giving more than a passing glance at the light in the shanty window.

He fancied, however, as he passed, that he heard a crackling in the bushes by the roadside; but he kept straight on, neither looking right nor left, and was soon out of sight.

When he had proceeded a good half-mile from the clearing, he got off his wheel and secreted it in a thicket of bushes, several rods from the road, putting out the light.

"There, old boss, you stay there!" Sol said, "while I go and take a peep at Mott Street Mag. I'm curious what the fly gal is doing so far from the scene of her accustomed labors. That she's here for a purpose, I well know."

Plunging into the woods, he made a circuit that eventually brought him out at the rear of the clearing wherein stood the shanty.

By this time it was quite dark, and he could scarcely make out the exact location of the shanty, but he stole stealthily forward, and at last reached it, and paused.

There was no door in the rear of the abode, nor were there windows; but there was a good-sized crevice that opened direct into the single room of the shanty, and commanded a good view of the interior—for the inner walls were of unplanned boards, the same as the outer.

With great curiosity, Sol applied his gaze to the hole, and proceeded to view the scene within.

The room was supplied with a meager amount of furniture, including a bed, and the floor was uncarpeted.

A woman was flitting to and fro, engaged in preparing some supper, and the watching detective had no difficulty in recognizing her as the same one who had passed him on the highway—Mott Street Mag.

Although attired in a rather shabby dress, she did not look like a woman who was outlawed and an outcast from society.

She was some twenty-five or six years of age, of good form, and really had a bright face, keen gray eyes, and brown hair. In other surroundings, and under other circumstances, she might have been pronounced rather pretty.

Tipped back in an easy-chair, near the door, engaged in smoking a clay pipe, was a dark-visaged, bewhiskered man, of ruffianly aspect and large physique.

Sol recognized him as the fellow who had attempted to carry Capitola off, and whom she had said was Dave Dolan.

"I wonder what this precious pair are doing here together?" Sol mused. "One would think by the looks of things that they were man and wife. I never heard of Mag having a spouse, however. Hal a knock at the door! They're going to have visitors. Who, I wonder? Matters are getting to be interesting, and I reckon I'll lounge at this place of observation, and learn what I can!"

It was true. A peremptory knock had sounded on the door, and, ceasing her work, Mag hastened to answer the summons.

She opened the door without any apparent hesitation, and admitted—Colonel Cook!

Sol Sharpe came near giving vent to an exclamation of surprise as he saw the man.

"Great Cæsar!" he mused. "Colonel Cook here among these black-sheep? Blazes! Am I on the eve of an important discovery? It looks like it!"

Mag handed Cook a chair, and he sat down and removed his gloves.

"Well," the colonel said, as he removed his gloves, "I see you are both on hand."

"We're here, of course!" Dolan replied.

"Where'd ye expect we'd be?"

"I didn't know but you had both skinned out, and left me in the lurch."

"Not while there's any money in ye!" Dolan declared bluntly. "We ain't particular who we work fer so long as we get the scads, are we, Mag?"

"Not a bit!" Mag agreed.

"So you failed this afternoon," the colonel observed, addressing Dolan.

"Curse the luck, yes! I had the gal all right and was making off with her, when a fellow heard her scream and give me chase. He had a pop, and so, to save my own bacon, I had to drop her and run for liberty. As it was, I got a slight wound in the calf of my leg!"

"So I learned at the villa. Do you know who your pursuer was?"

"No. I never saw him before."

"I presume I can tell you!" Mott Street Mag spoke up. "It was Sol Sharpe, the New York detective. I saw him coming up the road less than an hour ago. As I passed him he recognized me and called me by name."

"The same. I saw him at the villa. Where did he go?"

"I fled, and when I reached the edge of the clearing, I secreted myself in the edge of the bushes and waited. Pretty soon he came riding along on his bicycle and went on up the highway. I followed him a ways, but, as he still kept on his journey I returned here."

Colonel Cook scowled.

"Why didn't you shoot him?" he growled.

"I didn't dare to. If I had missed my aim, it would have only made matters worse. I don't believe he will bother us, however, for he kept straight on toward S—."

"Well, maybe you are right, but it is devilish unfortunate that he should turn up around here, at this of all times, and I shall feel ill at ease until satisfied that he is out of the neighborhood!"

"You know him then?"

"Well, I should presume, and he knows me too! He and I happen to know each other a little too well, and if ever I get a good chance at him, I shall not hesitate to silence him, you can bet. If he comes around here you are to do the same. Perhaps, however, he won't trouble us."

"If he comes around here when I'm about, I'll knock him on the head!" Dolan grunted. "But how is everything working, colonel?"

"Splendidly, except your failure to corral the girl. That don't matter so much, for I have another plan on tap that will answer as well."

"The sale is goin' to take place, then?"

"Positively!"

"Does any one suspect that we have discovered the big vein outcrop on the place?"

"Sh! hold your infernal tongue! Walls sometimes have ears! No; no one suspects anything of the sort. Nor has any particular interest been taken in the sale, for the farm itself is considered an almost worthless tract of land. I doubt if a score of people will be present at the sale."

"But supposing there should be? Supposing Capitola should have employed some one to run the bidding up to a big figure?"

"Bah!" and the colonel laughed loudly. "She is not smart enough to do that, and besides, there is no one fool enough to bid much. In case of emergency, however, I shall be on hand with eight thousand dollars in my pocket, and as the terms are spot cash at the time of sale, I will be sure to win, as no one will come equipped with such an amount. Oh! Black Diamond farm is mine beyond the shadow of a doubt!"

"Waal, boss, I hope so. How about Old Chet and his sister?"

"Oh! I've fixed that nicely. In fact I've fixed everything so it will work like a charm. Listen and I will explain:

"When the sale is over, and Carlisle and his sister receive their money, they'll start immediately for their former home in Maine. Thus, I will have rid myself of them, you see!"

"Yes. But how about the girl?"

"I've fixed that. Capitola is a minor, and as the Carlises give up guardianship of her, it is necessary that another guardian be appointed. Carlisle and I went before the Orphans' Court, and brought influence to bear to show that Capitola Hayden was not capable of taking care of herself, or of managing her own affairs, and, as a result, I have been duly qualified as her guardian until she is of age, and the manager of her business. I shall assume charge to-morrow."

"To-night I shall see the girl, explain matters, and endeavor to get her to consent to marry me. When she finds I am her guardian and have power over her, I have no doubt she will be horrified and rebellious. Being a high-strung and proud-spirited girl, she will, rather than remain under the same roof with me, make her escape, leaving me monarch of all I survey. Understand?"

"I do, and again I don't!" Dolan replied.

"Well, I'll further enlighten you!" the colonel

added, with a chuckle. "Capitola has but one living relative, a maiden aunt, living in New York—a kind old fossil, rich as Croesus. Naturally the girl will go to the metropolis and seek to find this aunt."

"Ah! I begin to see your game now," Dolan remarked.

"Perhaps; but not all of it. I shall not attempt to prevent Capitola leaving the villa; indeed, I presume she will leave before daybreak. You, Mag, must go at once to Pottsville, rigged out in your best attire, and hang around the P. & R. depot and await the girl's coming. When she takes the train for New York, which I am positive she will do, you are to go also. Dolan and I will follow later."

"On the train you must make the acquaintance and gain the confidence of the girl. She has never been away on such a journey, and if you work your game well you can soon win her over and secure her friendship. You are to offer to assist her to find her aunt, and are to extend her the hospitality of your room until the aunt can be found. Of course the aunt will be hard to find."

"Capitola will lose what money she has in some mysterious way, and will have to seek employment. You, Good Samaritan that you are, will get a job for both her and yourself in the house of a bachelor gentleman—myself, you see—and then she will be lost to the world! The coal-vein on this farm will be opened, and I will sell it for a big sum, and be out of that job. Then, when four years have elapsed, I will produce a bogus Capitola, get possession of the twenty thousand dollars on the bonds and, skip for Europe. Ha! ha! What do you think of that for a daisy game?"

"You're a cuss on wheels!" Dolan declared, enthusiastically. "But, what are I an' Mag to get?"

"You shall be well-paid, never fear. Here is a hundred dollars apiece for you now. More will follow later. You, Mag, are to prepare yourself at once and set out for Pottsville, so as to be there in time. My horse outside is at your disposal."

"My clothes and other things are all in Pottsville, so I will have no need to make any preparations here. But, colonel, are you quite sure this game will work right? I've no hankering for a place behind prison-bars again."

"Of course it will work all right! There's not the least danger but what it will."

"But the detective?"

"Oh, hang him! He knows nothing about the affair, and I have no fear of him."

"There's one thing I'd like to ask," Dolan said. "If the place is sold, who can give a legal deed to the property?"

"Why, Carlisle, of course. Besides others provisions made by Hubert Hayden before he went to sea, he made Carlisle a power of attorney to sell the property and execute a deed. Oh, no fear about that. Once the place is sold, it is sold for good."

Detective Sol Sharpe had listened to the foregoing conversation with no little interest.

"So, so! You have indeed laid a diabolical scheme to entrap and cheat a poor orphan, have you, Levi Cook?" he mused. "Well, I'll see how you succeed. I'll—"

What else he would have uttered remains only to be surmised.

A heavy blow upon the side of the head stretched him out upon the ground, where he lay like one dead!

CHAPTER IV.

A HUNTED GIRL'S DEFIANCE.

POOR CAP!

As she saw the New York detective ride out from the lawn at Black Diamond Villa, her heart sunk within her and a sense of unutterable loneliness came over her.

It seemed to her that, with his going, Sol Sharpe had taken with him all her hope and courage, and naught was left her but despair.

To-morrow the old home was to be sold—the only abiding-place she had known from infancy, dearer to her by far than gold, with its clinging memories—memories of her mother and father and of her childhood's early days.

It was to be sold—for a mere pittance, no doubt—and she would then be turned out on the pitiless world, to a destiny that had in store perils and sorrows uncounted.

Young and inexperienced as she was, how could she pass through such an ordeal?

"Oh, if Mr. Sharpe had not gone away!" she murmured, as she watched her guardian and Colonel Cook in conversation at the gate. "I had set great confidence in his befriending me,

but, now that he is gone, something tells me he will not return. Why was it he appeared so startled when he saw this man Cook, and almost immediately after took his departure? It is something I cannot understand. It looks suspicious, to say the least, for when Mr. Sharpe rode out the gate I saw him look at Colonel Cook very sharply, and the colonel returned the stare with interest. Can it be that this Mr. Sharpe is, after all, an adventurer, and, finding the colonel here, made the best of the opportunity to escape before he was exposed?"

"No, no! I cannot, will not believe it of him, in whom I set so much trust. If he did not mean to return, why did he give me this money? Oh, that I could understand it all!"

She counted the money over.

There was an even fifty dollars.

The address on the card was:

"Sol Sharpe, Detective,

"Number — Macdougall street, New York."

"What a strange name for a street," Capitola commented. "In a great city like New York, how could I inquire my way around? Oh, if I could find my Aunt Sarah, I know she would befriend me, for she is very rich and kind. I'd be tempted to run away and go to her at once if—if I only had the courage! But then I do not know where she lives, and I might not be able to find her. Then what in the world would I do?"

"Oh, the thought of being turned out of house and home almost drives me desperate! But no! I must be brave. I do wish that loathsome colonel would go away. If he thinks to see me to-night, he will get left. I'll go to my room and lock myself in."

And this she did, without further deliberation.

Soon after she had the satisfaction of seeing the colonel gallop away.

"Thank Heaven, he has gone!" she murmured. "No words can express how I detest that man."

She sat at the window, watching eagerly for Sol Sharpe's return, but the minutes dragged on and he did not come.

Feeling assured now that he would not come that night, she grew wearied and threw herself down upon the bed in despair.

She soon fell into a doze, and was oblivious of all trouble until, later in the evening, she was suddenly awakened by a loud rapping on the door of her room.

"Who is there?" she demanded, springing from the bed.

"It's me," responded the voice of Chetwynd Carlisle. "Come down to the parlor. I have something to tell you."

"Very well. I will be down in a minute, sir," Capitola replied. While, to herself, she said: "It can't be that the colonel is here at this late hour. Perhaps Mr. Sharpe has returned?"

She gave a few rearranging touches to her hair, then, unlocking the door, she descended to the parlor.

As she entered the room she perceived that her worst fears were confirmed. Colonel Cook was there seated in an easy-chair engaged in smoking a fragrant cigar.

Old Chet and Matilda were seated near at hand.

"Come in and sit down," Chet called out, commandingly, as Capitola paused on the threshold. "We have something to say to you of importance."

"Indeed?" and Capitola's eyes flashed with indignation. "Whom am I to understand by 'we'?"

"All three of us. This is probably the last time all of us will have an opportunity to chat together, and it is of importance that we should improve the chance. So come right in and sit down, for you are the one most concerned in what we have to say."

With a face pale with fear and anxiety, Capitola sunk upon a seat near the door.

"Go on," she said, faintly. "I am sure I cannot see in what way I should be interested in your schemes."

"Our schemes? Tut! tut! You do not know what you are talking about nor when you are well off. No one has any schemes, as you term it, except they be for your own welfare."

"What I have to say, my child, is this: You are aware that to-morrow is the day set for the sale of the Black Diamond Farm, according to the stipulations made by your father before he went to sea. Of course it will be hard for you to see the old place sold, but there is no help for it."

"Well, as soon as Matilda and I receive our

money out of the sale, we shall start immediately for our former home in Maine, and, naturally, we must resign our guardianship over you. This fact having become known to the Orphan's Court of Schuylkill county, it has, after careful deliberation, concluded that it was necessary to appoint another guardian to manage your affairs, until you become legally of age."

"Another guardian?" Capitola gasped.

"Exactly! A canvass was made for a proper person, and finally such a person was found, and a number of responsible business-men went on his bond; so that matter was all fixed up and settled in a legal manner."

"And, pray, who is this man who has been appointed my guardian without my consent?" the heiress demanded, haughtily.

"Your very dear friend, Colonel Cook."

Capitola gave a gasp of horror.

"That man my guardian!" she cried. "Never! I'd sooner die first, than have him for a guardian! I will not have it thus! I am old enough to choose my own guardian, and I will appeal!"

"Tut! tut! That will do no good, my dear. Everything is already fixed all right. The colonel is an honorable gentleman, and will serve you well. Your attempting to appeal would be utterly ridiculous. Colonel Cook is in good standing with the gentlemen of the court, and, as it is understood by them that you are willful and headstrong, and utterly incapacitated for managing your own business, they will pay no attention to your appeal. So be sensible for once, and you will find the colonel your warmest friend."

"He my friend? I'd sooner have the friendship of the vilest thing in existence. I loathe and despise the man, and he shall never be my guardian!"

"Tut! tut! You insult the colonel, child—insult your benefactor!—ay! your lover—an honorable, upright gentleman, who loves you devotedly, and desires to make you his wife."

"He my benefactor? Bah! Do not waste your breath, Chetwynd Carlisle, in making such absurd assertions. And as for my ever becoming his wife, he knows well I would die a thousand horrible deaths before I would marry him, the old schemer!"

"Nonsense! nonsense! Colonel, you love her, do you not?"

"With all my heart!" the colonel replied, suavely.

"And you intend to be her benefactor, as well as her guardian?"

"Certainly. I shall buy in the farm to-morrow, and then turn around and present it to Miss Capitola, in hopes that it may be the means of changing her undeservedly hard opinion of me to such an extent that she will accept my marriage offer!"

Capitola arose to her feet, her face very pale, her eyes glistening like diamonds.

"Colonel Cook!" she said, haughtily, "I am well aware you intend to buy my father's place, and have been scheming to obtain possession of it for a long time, because that it is rich, both in mineral ore and coal. Far from intending to present it to me, you expect to realize a fortune out of it yourself. If you could get me to marry you, in hopes of securing the twenty thousand dollars papa left me—then your plans would be complete indeed."

"But let me dispel all your hopes in this direction. You can buy the farm, most likely, providing you have money enough, but you cannot buy me! So set your heart at rest that, if you want a wife, you will have to look elsewhere. I should advise you to go to some place where there are plenty of old maids. Perhaps there you might find some one better suited to you, for surely no sensible girl would marry an old scarecrow like you!"

And, with this parting shot, Cap swept from the room.

Once in her own apartment, an expression of resolution came over her face.

"My path of duty is clear before me now," she murmured. "I must pack up a few things, and leave this place forever, while I have time. I will go to New York, and try to find Aunt Sarah!"

CHAPTER V.

CAPITOLA'S FLIGHT.—SALE OF BLACK DIAMOND FARM.

THE next day dawned over Black Diamond Farm most disagreeably.

The sky was overcast with cold-gray clouds; the rain was driven downward by a piercing wind; and altogether it was more like an autumn day than one in summer.

The folks at the villa were early astir, making

preparations to vacate the premises as soon as the sale took place.

All the furnishings of the place were to go with the farm, so that the Carlises would have nothing to move except their own personal effects.

The sale was to take place at ten o'clock, an auctioneer from Pottsville having been engaged to cry off the property.

Matilda, attired in her best, had breakfast ready by daybreak, and as it was the last meal they were to eat in the old home, she had condescended to bring forth all the little luxuries the house afforded.

"Faith an' be jabbers!" quoth Pat Murphy, as he took a seat at the table, "shure it's a f'aste good enough for the Pope himself. But it's loike all other things in this life—too good to last long!"

And without further comment, Pat proceeded to "pitch into" the delicacies in a surprising manner.

"Well, I should say the grub won't last long, if you make a glutton of yourself," Carlisle grunted. "Because Matilda has opened her heart once and given us a few delicacies, don't make a hog of yourself, Pat. Get up from the table and go and call Capitola."

"Ind'ade, sor, but I don't know where she is, sor."

"Don't know where she is? Why, you block-head, where do you suppose she is but in her room? Start yourself, or I'll assist you."

"But, yer Honor, I don't bel'ave she is in her room, sor, at all."

"Not in her room? What makes you think that?"

"Because, sor, her horse is gone from the stable, an' so is her saddle, too."

"The deuce you say! Has the little spitfire run away?" the irate guardian cried.

He quickly left the room and hurried upstairs, followed by Matilda and Pat.

When the door of Capitola's room was reached it was found to be locked.

"Come! Open up, here!" Carlisle cried, knocking. "Breakfast is all ready and waiting."

There was no response.

Within all remained silent.

"Kick in the door, Pat!" Carlisle commanded.

"We'll soon see if the girl is gone."

Pat planted one of his huge brogans against the door heavily and it flew open.

Capitola was not in the room!

Upon the bed, however, was a note addressed to Chetwynd Carlisle, which ran as follows, and which the old gentleman read aloud, after he had wiped and adjusted his spectacles:

"MR. CARLISLE:—By the time you receive this, I shall be far away and out of the clutches of the two vilest conspirators God's sun ever shone upon—yourself and Colonel Cook. Of course I shall lose my rights for a time, but I will have them back when I am of age, or you two arch-plotters will suffer the consequences. I am going where I will find a friend and protector. Give my regards to the unselfish and pious colonel, and tell Matilda not to forget her wig and false teeth when she leaves Black Diamond Villa.
CAPITOLA HAYDEN."

"Hooray!" yelled Pat. "Bully for the young mistress! Yez wanted to make her marry the colonel, so yez did, an' she's give yez the slip, so she has. Begorra! an' it's glad of it I am!"

"What! you dare to tell me that, you infernal bog-trotter?" Carlisle roared in his rage. "Get out of this house, you Irish loafer, or I'll put a bullet through you!"

"Niver a step! Yez haven't nary a revolver, yer Honor!" Pat cried, in high glee. "You're too big a coward to shoot one off, begorra, if yez did have one. But, don't git into an illegant passion, yer Honor, for it's goin' I am, to hunt up an' sthand by me young mistress, shure I am! Bog-trotter tho' I may be, I don't carry a whisky-sign on me nose, nor divil a bit do I rub snuff, nor wear a wig. Arrah! bad luck to yez, ye green-eyed gosoons! May I be appointed fireman o' the furnace in which yez git crameated, bedad!" and with an exasperating laugh, the Irishman skurried away down the stairs, two steps at a time, and that was the last that was seen of him.

Colonel Cook arrived at the villa soon afterward, and was told of Capitola's flight, but took the matter very coolly indeed.

"Oh! let her go!" he urged. "I'll hunt her up when I want her. She has no doubt gone to her aunt's in New York."

"Very likely! very likely!" Carlisle assented, and there the matter dropped.

The people soon began to arrive, and by nine o'clock quite a delegation of neighbors and valley citizens were on the ground.

Bob Hines, champion auctioneer of the Schuylkill Valley, was on hand, ready to knock down the property to the highest bidder, and George Glen, the attorney of the late Hubert Hayden, was also present to execute a deed to the purchaser.

Among those last to arrive was a very clerical-looking individual attired in a broadcloth suit and silk hat. His face was heavily bearded, and a pair of greenish glasses partly shaded his eyes. His hands were gloved, and in his hand he carried a gold-headed cane.

The arrival of this personage caused Colonel Cook considerable uneasiness, but he took good care not to betray his trepidation.

Promptly at ten o'clock Hines, the auctioneer, mounted a box upon the lawn ready for business.

"Gentlemen!" he began, "we will now proceed to business. The property I am about to offer for sale to-day is known as the Black Diamond estate, and consists of the land belonging thereto, the house, the outbuildings, the furniture, stock and implements—everything complete. This is to be a *bona fide* sale for spot-cash, and a deed will be immediately executed to the purchaser.

"You all probably are aware what the property is, and therefore there is no necessity of explanation or description. The whole thing will be sold in a lump to the highest bidder, irrespective of persons. Now, how much am I offered for the estate?"

"Five hundred dollars!" shouted Colonel Cook, from the piazza.

"Five hundred dollars I'm offered. Going at five hundred—who'll make it six?"

"One thousand dollars!" bid the clerical stranger.

"One thousand I'm offered—who'll make it two? Keep the ball a-rolling, gents. Don't be skeered of a few paltry dollars. Remember, I'm a poor lone orphan, with a wife, nine children, and a mother-in-law to support, and as I get ten cents commission on every dollar you bid, you are in duty bound to help me to swell my exchequer!"

"One thousand and one dollars!" bid a weazen-faced little man, who was sanguine that his munificent offer would win the prize.

"Three thousand!" shouted the colonel.

"Three thousand is offered—three thousand—going at three! Who'll make it four? Three—three—three—who'll make it four?"

"Five thousand dollars!" called out the clerical gentleman, quietly.

Colonel Cook uttered an oath and leaped down off the piazza.

"See here, stranger!" he cried, strutting up to the bidder, "who are you?"

"My name is Timothy Trainor, sir!" was the quiet answer.

"Timothy Trainor, eh? Where are you from?"

"I don't know as that concerns you, sir. However, if it will do you any good to know, I am from New York!"

"Oh, you are! Now, look here. There's no use of your bidding for this property. You've already run it up to twice its value; and, more than that, I intend to buy the place, and you might as well drop out."

"I shall suit myself about that," was the reply. "This is a public sale, and I have a right to bid whatever and whenever I please."

"Oh! indeed!" and the colonel grew even more wrathful. "Perhaps you are not aware that whoever this place is sold to must pay down spot-cash."

"I understand that, sir."

"Then let's see if you've got any money before you go to monkeyin' in this sale any more."

"If the property is sold to me, I shall pay for it before leaving the grounds. That is all that is required by the terms of the sale."

"Is it? Well, we'll see. You're an adventurer, and I'll have you put off the place. You haven't five thousand cents to your name, let alone five thousand dollars."

"You are mistaken. I have five thousand dollars, and as much more as may be required to secure this place, as against any bid you can make."

"You are a liar!" hissed the colonel, shaking his fist in the stranger's face. "I've a mind to—"

Just what he had a mind to do, the enraged conspirator did not make plain at that particular minute, for he received a quick blow from Mr. Trainor's gloved fist that laid him neatly on his back.

Cook lay a moment before he attempted to regain his feet, and when he did, there was a devilish gleam in his sinister eyes.

"I'll fix you for that!" he hissed, but walked a few paces away, evidently not caring to sample Trainor's muscle again.

"Come, come! Time is money!" cried Hines. "I'm offered five thousand dollars by Trainor. Who makes it six?"

"Six!" yelled the colonel.

"Six is offered! Six—six—six—going at six. Who will make it seven? Remember, gents, bid no more than what you have got the cash to pay down, as this sale is positive, and the money must be forthcoming immediately after the property is knocked down to the highest bidder. Six thousand I'm offered. Who will make it seven?"

"Seven thousand dollars!" quickly put in Timothy Trainor.

"Eight thousand!" roared Cook, now in a state of frantic excitement.

"Nine thousand!" returned Trainor.

"Nine thousand I'm offered!" sung out Hines. "Make it ten, colonel?"

"I have no more money with me," Cook said, with an oath. "However, I will raise that man's bid, by giving my horse and gold watch!"

"Sorry, colonel, but we are selling property, not buying it. Nine thousand dollars I'm offered for the Black Diamond property—nine thousand I hear. Who will raise the bid? Going at nine thousand—do I hear ten? Nine thousand, once!—nine thousand, twice!—nine thousand, THREE times!—and—sold, to Timothy Trainor, for nine thousand dollars!"

Pen can hardly describe the scene of excitement that followed. Those who had come to attend the sale had expected Cook would get the property, just as much as Cook had expected to get it himself; but when the auctioneer knocked the property down to the stranger, a murmur of applause went up, for the prompt manner in which Trainor had retaliated for the insult Cook had given him, had won the sympathies of all present.

As for the colonel, he tore around like a mad bull, and made the air fairly echo with his maledictions. But as no one paid any attention to him, he gradually quieted down, and watched proceedings, his face clearly expressing the disappointment and hate that stirred within his evil heart.

He had been defeated in his scheme, but that did not signify, by any means, that he was conquered.

As for Timothy Trainor, he promptly paid in to Lawyer Glen's hands the nine thousand dollars, and received a deed to the property, and the keys to the villa and out-buildings—a full clear title that no court would question.

He then placed a man who had accompanied him to the sale in charge of the premises.

After he had executed the deed and paid the auctioneer his fees, Lawyer Glen remarked:

"According to the stipulations left behind by the late Hubert Hayden, one-third of the money I have in my possession goes to Chetwynd Carlisle, another third to his sister, Matilda, and the remaining third to Capitola Hayden. She being absent, I shall place her third in the hands of the Orphans' Court, to await her return!"

"I have been appointed her guardian," Colonel Cook announced, stepping quickly forward, "and therefore demand that you surrender my ward's money to me!"

"I shall pay it to the court!" Glen said, decisively. "If it chooses to give it to you, it can—but at its peril!"

The Carlises received their money, and, soon after, the crowd dispersed.

While Timothy Trainor was returning toward Pottsville, Colonel Cook was saying to Dave Dolan at the clearing shanty:

"Here are five hundred dollars. Follow this man, Trainor, until you trace him to his lair. Then find me in New York. I've suffered defeat, but I am not conquered. My turn comes next! It's Cook against the field now, and don't you forget it, Davy!"

CHAPTER VI.

MISS ARAMINTA ARLINGTON.

WHAT of Capitola?

No sooner was her mind made up to fly from Black Diamond Villa, than she set about preparations for departure.

The Carlises had been very close with her in money matters, and consequently she did not have a very extensive wardrobe. She arrayed herself in as good as she possessed, however, and bundling up a change of clothing, together with a few pictures and trinkets that were especially dear to her, she was ready to go.

But she did not venture from the villa then.

She waited until the hands of the little clock on her mantel pointed out the hour of twelve.

The house was silent, and its inmates with exception of herself, were sound asleep ere this.

Leaving the note she had written on her bed, she left the room, locked the door, and stole cautiously down-stairs.

To get out of the house then without arousing any one was an easy matter, and she soon stood out of doors in the darkness of the night;—for the sky had clouded over, and a storm evidently was impending.

Making her way to the stable, she saddled her own horse, and in a few minutes more was dashing away toward Pottsville.

"Good-by, old home!" she murmured, glancing back at the villa with tearful eyes. "It is hard to leave you, but I feel it is my duty. To escape that villain, Colonel Cook, I must dare anything. I may have trials before me, but I will meet them bravely. With God to guide me I shall not be entirely friendless.

"If Mr. Sharpe returns to the villa, he naturally will learn of my flight, and supposing I have gone to New York, will follow and seek to find me. If I can't find him, or my Aunt Sarah, surely I will not starve, for I have heard said that there is plenty of work for girls in New York!"

So she rode on her way, courageous and hopeful.

She knew there was an early morning train leaving Pottsville for Philadelphia, and calculated she could cover the distance between Black Diamond Farm and the station in time to catch it.

Just at daybreak she rode into Pottsville, and stabling the horse at one of the hotels, she hurried to the depot.

Here she learned, to her joy, that she would have only a few minutes to wait before the train started; but even these minutes seemed to drag by on leaden wings, so eager was she to depart.

At last she was comfortably seated in one of the cars, and felt an intense sense of relief. She had at least, thus far, escaped the persecutions of Colonel Cook.

The train was crowded with passengers, and when a lady came along and asked to share the seat with Capitola, she assented with pleasure.

The lady was neatly attired, quite attractive of feature, and did not look much over twenty years of age, though possibly she was older.

Naturally, she and Capitola fell into conversation; for it would be impossible for two women to travel side by side without having something to say.

"I suppose you are going to Philadelphia?" the woman said, by way of introduction. "Phily is such a love of a city, I think."

"I am going to New York," Capitola replied.

"Indeed? Why, that is nice. I am going to New York also. We can be company to each other all the way. I think it is so much nicer to have some one to talk to, when one is traveling."

"I suppose it is. I have never traveled any, and so I am sure I don't know," Capitola replied, with a faint smile.

"Oh, indeed? Then you have never been in New York before?"

"No, ma'am."

"Ah! I see. You are going on a visit to friends, eh?"

"I am going in search of an aunt who lives there, but whose address I do not know."

"Indeed? Why, my dear child, it will be a hard task for you to find her, will it not? There are so many people in New York, you know, and so many different persons of the same name. Is your aunt a person of prominence?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. She used to be quite well off."

"Oh, no doubt she is an upper-tenner, then, and it may not be such a hard matter to find her. What is her name?"

"Sarah Smith, ma'am!"

"For the land o' goodness! Sarah Smith?"

"Yes, ma'am. Do you know her?" Cap asked, eagerly, it never having occurred to her that there could be more than one Sarah Smith in the metropolis.

Her companion lay back and gave vent to a merry laugh.

"Know her?" she exclaimed. "Why, my good child, I know at least a dozen Sarah Smiths!"

"A dozen!"

"Cert. Why, there's no end to the Smith family in New York you can believe, and as for the Sarahs, they're a legion. Why, do you know, that every time they take a census of the population, they start out a party of men to

bunt up all the Smith family, and when the men turn in their reports, about thirty per cent. more of Smiths is added, to be sure that the whole territory has been covered!"

Capitola didn't know this, and was rather inclined to think that her new acquaintance was prone to stretch the truth, or to be very sarcastic.

She didn't say so, however.

"My name is Miss Araminta Arlington," the voluble lady said, after a brief silence. "What's yours?"

"Capitola Hayden, ma'am."

"My, what an odd name! Now, do you know I am quite anxious about you, Miss Hayden?"

"Why so?"

"Because you are young and inexperienced, and unfit to visit a great wicked city like New York unaccompanied by some friend. Now, as for me, I've always lived there and know the ropes, but with you it is different. You evidently know nothing about city life, and the many traps and pitfalls that lie in the path of strangers. Why, if I was you, and had never been in the place, I'd never dare to visit it except I had some one to protect me. Why, dear, you may not be able to find your aunt in a month's time. Then, what would you do, pray?"

"Dear me, I'm sure I don't know," Capitola replied, beginning to get alarmed. "You oughtn't to discourage me, though."

"Very true, and I am not trying to. I am only telling you that New York is a very bad, wicked place, and a dangerous place for a girl without friends or acquaintances. In case of your not finding your aunt as soon as you hope, miss, how much money have you got to keep you?"

"I have a trifle over fifty dollars, ma'am."

"Fifty dollars, eh? Well, now, let's see. I think possible you may be able to get a pretty fair room and board at the Fifth Avenue Hotel for fifty a week, though I'm not sure."

"Fifty dollars a week?" Capitola echoed in astonishment. "Why, surely, ma'am, there must be places one can get accommodations cheaper than that?"

"Oh! yes, there are a few. But then, you know, they ain't par excellence. For that matter, one can get lodgin' down in the Bowery for ten cents a bunk, an' if you can live on soup, you can get t. at for five cents a plate!"

Poor Capitola looked horrified.

At which Araminta Arlington laughed rather boisterously.

"Oh! come! now, don't get discouraged," she encouraged. "I'll see you through in prime shape. When we get in New York I'll take you home with me. It ain't much of a home—only one room, and not very well furnished, but, there's plenty of room for both of us and it won't cost you a cent. Then if you want to live on what I do, you can get along cheap. I have three changes of feed a day, beef-stew and coffee for breakfast, coffee and beef-stew for dinner, and beef-stew and coffee for supper. Then, for a change, on Sundays I have hash. Oh! we'll get along famous. I ain't a millionairess, but I do live."

"I am very grateful for your kind invitation, miss, and if—if you would help me to find my aunt, I will pay you for it."

"Bosh! Do you s'pose I'd take your money? Oh, no! I'll do all I can to help you find your Aunt Sarah, and if we can't find her, I'll hunt you up a job of some sort."

"Oh, you are very kind, miss."

"Yes, I ought to be. I've been kicked around a bit, and I know how to pity one who doesn't know the ropes. Oh, I tell you, if any one can take care of you in New York, that girl is Miss Araminta Arlington."

"Then, truly, I am glad to have met so good a friend," Capitola declared, beginning to feel hopeful again. "Pray, what do you do for a living?"

"Oh, whatever I can. Sometimes I sew, sometimes I clerk it, and sometimes I work at house service on special occasions. There's a rich old bach I work for up on Seventh avenue, when he isn't traveling. I expect he'll be back in the city soon, and when he does come, I'm solid for a good job. If you haven't found your aunt by that time, perhaps I can work you in there as up-stairs maid."

Once more Capitola was forced to express her gratitude toward her new-found friend.

Araminta continued to chat on, volubly, and by the time the train reached Philadelphia, she had thoroughly impressed Capitola that New York was the very wickedest place on the face of the whole earth, and that she, Araminta, was a person the world could not get along without.

Finally they reached the Quaker City, changed cars, and were speedily hurried along toward New York.

When they reached the big city, it was morning, and Miss Araminta Arlington took the crowded West street cars, so managed to avoid meeting policemen face to face. After awhile they took another car, and ere long got out and walked to a narrow street, where the houses were dingy, and everything went to indicate the poverty and wretchedness of the residents.

Entering one of the tenements, Araminta conducted her guest to a room on the fourth floor, which she announced was her "hang out."

The place was furnished only with a bed, stove, a couple of chairs, a table and a few dishes and cooking utensils, and when poor Capitola looked back and thought of the pleasant home she had left, her heart sunk within her.

But she was in New York, and must do the best she could, until she could find her aunt, or Sol Sharpe.

And Sol Sharpe—where was he?

CHAPTER VII.

IN A BARREL.

As may be supposed, the blow Sol Sharpe received upon the head, when spying at the cabin, instantly deprived him of his senses, and he did not know what had struck him.

When he awoke to consciousness, he found himself in utter darkness, and until his eyes became somewhat more accustomed to the gloom, he could not form much of an idea of his whereabouts.

He was painfully aware that his head was very sore, and that he had been knocked down.

His hands and feet were not bound, but he was confined in a cramped position, and finally came to the conclusion that he was nothing more nor less than imprisoned in a barrel!

And not only imprisoned in a barrel, but the barrel had been headed up!

It was a startling discovery, and a decidedly unenviable one, not only owing to his cramped-up position, but because the breathing air within the place was very meager, a single auger-hole in the top head of the barrel admitting all the air there was.

"Well, I hope I may never see daylight if I ain't in a daisy fix!" the detective mused, when he had decided just where he was. "I'm done up in a package, ready for shipment, sure enough, and the prospects of getting out of this scrape are mighty thin. I wonder where I am, and how long I've been cooped up here, anyhow? From the aching of my limbs, I should judge for a week or two, at the least."

"Let me see: I was standing in the rear of the shanty in the clearing, after listening to what Colonel Cook had been saying to Dave Dolan and Mott Street Mag. Then, first I knew, I got a thump on the head, and I forgot all I ever did know. It wasn't a slight blow, either, for my head's as sore as an Irishman's after a Donnybrook fair."

"I reckon that, whoever laid me out, took me for dead, and barreled me up, so my corpse wouldn't be found. But I'm still alive, and it behooves me to get out of this coop at once, for Heaven only knows what fate poor Capitola Hayden may be suffering, long ere this, at the hands of these execrable villains. Poor dove, to be hunted by such buzzards!"

All he had heard, while playing eavesdropper at the clearing shanty, and which he now recalled vividly, rendered his anxiety for the welfare of Capitola intense, for, brief as had been their acquaintance, his admiration for her was more than that of a friend, as he had to confess to himself.

Gathering all his strength, he made an attempt to burst from his prison.

But in vain. He might as well have tried to burst from a prison-wall of iron.

"No use of trying in that way," he muttered.

"If I had a head like a negro, I might butt the head out of the barrel, but, unfortunately, my head isn't in butting condition. Wonder how I'm going to work the racket, anyhow?"

The barrel was standing up on end, and he found, by swaying backward and forward, that it would not be a hard matter to tip it over on its side.

"I wonder where I'd go to, if I were to try it?" he mused. "The chances are that I'd roll somewhere, providing there's any descending land hereabouts. I'll try it, anyhow."

So he began to pitch to and fro, and, after two or three attempts, succeeded in throwing the barrel over on its side, and greatly to his

surprise and satisfaction, the barrel began to roll rapidly and he found himself going over and over, faster and faster, until his novel conveyance had attained an almost alarming speed.

Evidently it was rolling down a steep and long hill, and every few yards the barrel would strike some obstruction with fearful force, bound into the air, and then go tearing on down the incline with increased velocity.

The imprisoned detective, of course, grew dizzy, and when at length the barrel ceased to revolve, he was so mixed up that he literally did not know whether he was afoot or on horseback.

Making a second attempt to break from his confinement, Sol found that he was just as badly off as he was before his descent of the hill.

By a deal of twisting he got his head around in such a position that he could peer out of the hole above him.

He was not able to see much, but perceived that his strong prison was lying in a dusty road at the foot of a steep hill.

This discovery gave him a degree of hope, at least.

Perhaps some one would come along the highway soon whom he could get to release him.

He was nourishing this hope and cogitating over his novel experience in the last few hours, when he heard the rumble of a heavy wagon approaching.

Nearer and nearer it came, until it was but a few feet from the barrel.

Then the wagon stopped, and two men sprung out and approached the barrel.

"Why, it's a bar'l o' sugar!" one of them exclaimed, lifting the barrel on end.

"No, it ain't. It's a bar'l o' 'taters, an' I know whose it is," declared the second man. "I heard Jim Gorham say he was goin' to take a bar'l o' new 'taters to market to-day. He's lost the bar'l out o' his wagon."

"What shall we do with it?"

"Why, chuck it on the wagon. We'll drop it off at old Toby's tavern, sell it to him for a gallon of whisky, and no one will ever be the wiser for it."

"All right. This will be gittin' square with Gorham for shootin' our dog."

Overhearing all this, and greatly amused at it, a spirit of mischief entered the detective's brain.

"Oh, won't I give them a scare!" he muttered.

The next minute the barrel was lifted from the ground by the two men and carried toward the wagon.

"By thunder! 'pears to me these are mighty heavy 'taters!" growled one man.

"New 'taters are allus heavier than old ones," declared the other. "Now, then, heave-oh!"

Just as he felt them give the extra effort, Sol Sharpe gave vent to an unearthly yell.

As a result the farmers dropped the barrel in horror, and looked about them to see whence had come the astounding sound.

"Come! come! Break open this barrel, and let me out!" roared Sol. "I'm shut up in here!"

This was literally the straw that broke the camel's back, for the farmers made a rush for the wagon, clambered into it, and the cumbersome vehicle rumbled away at a great speed.

"No more ill-gotten 'taters for them!" Sol muttered, grimly. "Confound it, I'm as bad off as ever!"

In this tumble from the wagon, the barrel-head beneath his feet evidently was sprung, for he plainly felt it give way to his pressure.

Joy! The accident had been his salvation!

In a few moments the head fell outward under his pressure, and soon he was crawling out of the barrel, once more free!

After stretching his cramped limbs, and taking a little exercise to get his blood in circulation, he searched his person, and found that his watch, money and other pocket possessions were gone.

Then trying to determine his whereabouts, after some difficulty he got his bearings, and retraced his way to the clearing.

But the shanty was empty and locked.

Making a tour through the woods, he finally came to where he had previously left his bicycle, and finding the machine all right, just as he had left it, he mounted and rode slowly toward Black Diamond Villa.

There he discovered that everything was closed up, and only one man was about the premises—the same left in charge by Timothy Trainor.

Questioning this man, who answered to the name Connor, Sol learned that the property had

been sold two days before to a Mr. Trainor of New York, who, after installing Connor to look after things, had taken his departure without saying when he would return.

Chetwynd Carlisle and Matilda had departed for Maine, and Capitola had fled from the villa prior to the sale; this much the detective ascertained, and no more.

Of Colonel Cook, or his whereabouts, Connor knew nothing; nor of Pat Murphy.

So Solomon bade his informal adieu, and, mounting his bicycle, sped away toward Pottsville.

"I must lose no time now," he decided. "Capitola has gone to seek either me or this aunt of hers in New York. If Cook's plans worked, the poor girl is no doubt in the power of Mott Street Mag. Very likely Cook and Dolan are also in New York by this time, while I am nearly three days behind my game."

"I wonder who Timothy Trainor is? And as for the infernal scoundrel Pat Murphy, it's plain he ran off with the big sum I gave him. I was a fool not to have given it to Capitola. However, I will win yet. I know this man Cook, and he knows me; so it is Sol Sharpe against the crook and all his host, and I'll bet my grandfather's watch that the crook don't win!"

As soon as he reached Pottsville, he succeeded in getting a respectable loan on his bicycle, which was one of the most expensive machines of its kind, and with this "lift" he purchased a ticket for New York, and took the first available train for the metropolis.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON HIS OLD TRAMPING GROUND.

ONCE in New York City again, Sol Sharpe proceeded to his combined office and lodging-room, in an apartment house on Great Jones street.

It was a cheerful, well-furnished room, and the best of it was, everything in it belonged to the tenant.

After a bath and making a complete change of clothing, the detective sat down at his desk with a City Directory in his hand.

In the "C" columns he came to the following entry:

"Cook, Levi P., — Seventh ave."

"That's where this same Colonel Cook used to hang out, and he possibly does so still. My dear uncle Levi, I am afraid your dutiful nephew will be under the painful necessity of investigating your case, ere long!"

The Star Shadower now took from his wall book-shelf another large volume in manuscript, and proceeded to pore over its contents.

This was a complete record of the names of all the criminals who had been sent from New York to Auburn, Sing Sing and Blackwell's Island prisons during the previous five years, together with the date of their commitment, and the length and time of expiration of sentence.

It was all in his own handwriting, and had cost Sharpe many an hour's labor and much inquiry and search to perfect the work, up to within a few weeks of that date.

"Mott Street Mag's name ought to be down here," he mused, as he turned over the leaves. "If I remember correctly she was sent to the Island."

But he was mistaken as to that, for he found her name on the Sing Sing list:

"Margaret Meeks (Mott Street Mag), professional thief and confidence woman, residence No. — Mott street; age twenty-six, height five feet two, hair dark brown, eyes blue; knife-scar on back of neck; sent to prison at Sing Sing, Jan. 2 188-, for two years, for complicity in a burglary."

This paragraph Sol copied in his note-book.

"It is strange that nothing of her escape from Sing Sing has been reported. Probably the matter has been mysteriously hushed up, as others have in the past. Well, I want to find Mag and my royal uncle Levi, then most likely I will be able to find my fair friend Capitola."

"I'll begin work at once, for no doubt the poor girl is in dire distress ere this."

Leaving the house, Sol wended his way toward Mott street. He was well acquainted with that disreputable thoroughfare, but not having had occasion to visit it for some time, had little fear that he would be spotted as a danger-signal to the crooks that haunt it.

He cocked his hat over his left eye, thrust his hands into his pants pocket, and with a cigar held in his mouth in the most approved "bum" style, looked the beau ideal of a tough of the dives, the suit he wore being of a "loud" pattern.

He did not go to the number where Mott Street Mag had lived, but dropped into a saloon, where half a dozen vicious-looking chaps were shaking dice at the bar.

They gave the new-comer a sharp glance, and then went on shaking.

Walking up to the bar, Sol gave a sleepy stare at the bartender, a red-headed Irishman of gigantic proportions, and demanded:

"Say, pal, is the parson in?"

The big chap behind the bar flashed a keen glance at the interrogator, and then set out the bottle and glasses.

"The parson's gone to a weddin'," he answered, "but the dominie is in. Just arrived in town?"

"Yes."

"Been off for a vacation, eh?"

"Yes — up along the Hudson. Beautiful scenery up that way."

"I suppose so. Are we in?"

"Cert." and Sol laid a five-dollar bill on the counter, having replenished his finances before leaving his room. "Who's the tads?"

"This one here is Scroochy, next is Horner, and the rest are Smiley's. Who are you?"

Sol looked cautiously about him, as if he did not care about letting his name be generally known.

"You've heard of Handsome Hennessey, eh?" he queried.

The others all nodded, and put out their hands.

"Good boy, Handsome!" was Scroochy's welcome. "Glad you're out, and in trim. Let's all drink!"

And drink they did, to the future health and prosperity of Handsome Hennessey, who, it happened, was then in Sing Sing Prison, serving out a two-year term.

Hennessey, before being sent up, had been one of New York's most noted pickpockets; but he had been nabbed in the act, finally, and sent up the river.

He was known all over town, by repute, but only the east-siders saw much of him; hence, Sol Sharpe had dared to play the rôle.

Indeed, he bore a striking resemblance to the crook, what with his loud dress and rowdyish manners.

After the drinks, Sol fell into an easy, rambling conversation with the "gang," and somewhat surprised them with his knowledge of the crooks and the "covers" of Gotham, and the result was that the listeners united in pronouncing him a dandy.

"Oh, I know 'em all!" Sol assured, "so I thought I'd come over this way and see if I couldn't locate an old-time friend of mine."

"Who's that?" queried Blodgett, the bartender.

"Oh, one o' yer people over this way—Mag Meeks. She was up at Sing Sing same time I was, but I heard she got out someway."

"So she did, tho' I reckon no one knows exactly how!" Blodgett responded. "I saw her only yesterday."

"Is that so? Then I'm in luck, for I want to see her bad. Is she hangin' out at the old place?"

"Not she. Mag's too fly a bird to return to a cage she is once caught in."

"I reckon she is. Then you don't know where she is, eh?"

"No."

"Well, if you see her, tell her an old friend has important news for her, and to leave her address with you. I'll drop in again in a day or so."

"All right. Do so. If I see Mag I'll give her the tip."

Then Sol "set 'em up" once more, and after bidding his new-made acquaintances good-day, took his departure.

"So Mag is not at the old base, eh?" he muttered. "I was afraid of that, and it may puzzle me to get on to her trail now."

Leaving Mott street, he made his way to an East-side pawn-shop, which he knew was a place where thieves were wont to dispose of stolen goods—a "fence," in police parlance.

Unlike many other places of its kind in Gotham, this particular "fence" was not kept by a gentleman of the Jewish persuasion, but by a "reformed" American, named Newton, who

*This query is said to be in vogue with all jail-birds, who, on being released from prison, seek some known haunt of the "profesh," and desire a drink. It is understood as a letter of introduction, and a token that the inquirer has just got out and is hunting up his old friends. The bartender sizes up his man, and if the query is put in a certain peculiar tone of voice, the bottle is set forth, and the new-comer is thereby apprised that he is welcome.

had spent the better portion of his life behind the bars.

Newton had several times been "pulled" for receiving and disposing of stolen goods, but, as he was solid with a certain political "boss" in his precinct, he always managed to get out of his trouble by payment of costs, and having his case placed on file, never to be called.

Although Newton did not personally know Sol Sharpe, Sol knew Newton by sight, and when he entered the shop, nodded familiarly.

"How are you, boss?" he saluted. "How is biz?"

"Business is very bad," was the reply. "Have you got something to sell?"

"Not this eve. Has my old chum been around within a day or two?"

"Your chum? How the deuce do I know who your chum is? I don't know who your chum is!"

"You don't, eh? Don't recognize me neither, I presume?"

"No, I don't."

"Well, I'm Handsome Hennessey, just down from Sing Sing. D'ye know me now?"

"Not personally, though I've heard of you. Who is the chum you had reference to?"

"Mott Street Mag!"

"The deuce you say! Do you know her?"

"Well I should shiver! I presume to suppose that when I and her ladyship kin find one another we will go in search of a preacher!"

"What! You two don't intend to marry each other?"

"Yas; we're goin' to get spliced. It's an old sayin' 'in union there is strength,' an' when Mag an' I git hitched up, we'll make the strongest team in the biz. The trouble is I can't find the gal. She said I was to find her in New York, but I'll be cracked wi' a jimmy if I know where she hangs out."

"Why, she paid me a call not three hours ago," Newton said, confidentially. "But she didn't say where her hang-out was."

"Ah! she was here, was she? Did she deposit anything with you?"

"Yes. You ought to see the daisy watch she brought me. Wait, and I'll show it to you."

He stepped into an adjoining room, soon returning with the watch in question.

It was a fine gold time-piece, with heavy hunting-case, and handsome gold chain attached.

Sol received it, and proceeded to examine it leisurely, his face betraying none of the surprise he felt—for the watch was his own, being the very one he wore at the time he was assaulted near Black Diamond Villa!

There was no mistake about this, for his name was engraved on the outside case.

"This is a very fine watch," Sol said, while examining it. "How much did you loan on it?"

"Well, watches are a great drug on the market," Newton said, "and so I could only give her about one-sixth of the real value."

"Or, in other words, about fifteen dollars, eh? Oh, well, you're not so much out of pocket, as though you had made an advance of twenty-five or thirty," Sol said, pocketing the time-piece, and attaching the chain to his vest.

"Here! here! What do you mean?" Newton demanded, excitedly. "Give me back that watch!"

"Not if I know myself!" Sol replied, coolly. "It so happens, friend Newton, that this watch belongs to me!"

"To you, sir!"

"To me. Did you notice the name engraved upon the case?"

"I did—it is Solomon Sharpe!"

"Exactly. And I am Solomon Sharpe, at your service, or, for short, Sol Sharpe, the New York Night-Hawk Detective and sneak-snatcher! Ha! ha! I see you recognize the name. You see, my dear Newt, I was robbed of this watch by Mott Street Mag, and knowing you were a purchaser of stolen goods, I presumed Maggie might have been here to see you."

Newton had grown pale with alarm.

"For God's sake, take the watch, then, and let the matter drop!" he urged. "I did not know it had been stolen, or I would not have bought it. I am not handling crooked goods any more. I have reformed, and am leading an honest, Christian life."

"Oh! of course you are!" Sol replied. "I can see a meetin'-house buggin' right out of your eyes, you're so pious and honest! But, Newt, you must shell out something more. I want to know where I can find Mott Street Mag!"

"Upon my word of honor, I do not know."

"Your word of honor! Humph! you make me weary. You tell me where the woman is,

or I'll go and make a complaint against you, as sure as my name is Sharpe!"

"Good Heavens, man, how can I tell you when I do not know!" ejaculated the fence. "If I knew I'd tell you, and go with you and try to make Mag give up the money I advanced her. But as sure as my name is Newton, she gave me no intimation as to where she was staying!"

Sol did not take much stock in this assertion, but as he had regained his watch, he concluded not to bother any longer with the broker.

It would be a loss of time now to arrest him, and he would get no reward for his pains in the bargain. So, with a few words of admonition, he departed.

Before starting home he took a turn through some of the small thoroughfares on the East side in hopes that he might run across either Mag or Dave Dolan.

It was while passing through a dark, deserted street, flanked on either side by great grim warehouses, that an urchin, ragged and dirty, ran up to him and pulled vigorously at his coat.

"Say, mister," he said, "d'ye know where there's a cop?"

"No. Why do you ask?" demanded Sol.

"Why do you ask?"

"Cause there's a man lying up here all covered with blood, a-callin' for help. Some one's been poundin' blazes out o' him, I guess."

"The deuce you say. Lead the way, and I will go to his assistance."

"But, sir, he wants a cop."

"I am a detective, and will do as well. Lead on, I tell you."

"All right, mister. Come along."

And the boy led off at a run.

In order to keep him in sight Sol was obliged to run, and that, too, briskly.

CHAPTER IX.

A SHORT-LIVED TRIUMPH.

"ARRAH! I'm a daisy, I am, an' divil a wan I care who knows it, at all. What an illegant gentleman I am, to be sure! Begorra! if I was over in the ould country, shure they'd take me for a mumber av Parliament, so they would! It's not flatherin' mysilf I would be doin', but by the howly saints, I look like a regular dude!"

The speaker was the most conspicuous object in a handsomely-furnished room at one of Gotham's principal hotels. He was attired in a decidedly flashy suit of gray clothes, wore a white high hat, patent-leather shoes, white shirt, *au fait* neckwear, and kid gloves; he carried a gold-headed cane and wore a heavy gold watch-chain stretched across his vest-front.

Surely, in point of personal appearance, Broadway could not produce a more pronounced swell, but Pat Murphy's freckled and decidedly Hibernian visage illy corresponded with his dandy rig-out.

For Pat Murphy the man was, though his face was now cleanly shorn of the "sluggers" he wore when a servant at Black Diamond Villa.

A broad smile of satisfaction irradiated his ruddy face as he surveyed himself in a glass.

"Phwat a dandy I am, to be shure!" he commented, tipping his hat a little to the right side of his head.

"Only to think! I'm now the Honorable Timothy Trainor, M. P.—tho' the divil only knows what M. P. sthands for, unless it's milk punch. Timothy Trainor, M. P."

"Let me see. Ah! I have it. Timothy Trainor, M. P., from Tipperary; mumber o' Parliament from Tipperary, bedad! Shure, that's the very thing. The folks'll think I'm second cousin to a duke."

"A wee bit ago I was plain Pat Murphy, a poor, hard-wurkin' mon; now I'm Trainor, the gentleman av leisure. Phat a wuruld this is gettin' to be, to be shure. One day a man is a beggar, begorra, an' the nixt he's a nabob."

"Just to think av it! Here I am at a big foive-dollar-a-day hotel, livin' loike a king. Faith, what a gossoon I was to buy in that farm at all. I'd thin have, in all, nigh twelve thousand dollars. Bad luck to me! phat a fool I was!"

"No. I wasn't no fool, nayther. I happen to know there is coal on the farm as well as Mister Cook, the son-av-a-sea-cook! An' that reminds me: it's nigh time me advertisement come out in the paper."

He rung for a waiter, who soon answered the summons.

"Get me all the mornin' papers," Pat said, tossing him a dollar, "an' give the change to the cook, if she's Irish."

The sable waiter skurried away, and directly

returned with a stack of papers, which Murphy sorted over until he came to the one in which he had advertised the previous night.

He soon found the sought-for notice, which he had paid the desk-clerk a dollar to write up for him, and had paid two dollars a line for its insertion as reading matter.

It was in the reading columns, and ran thus:

"The Honorable Timothy Trainor, who owns a farm near Pottsville, on which there are valuable deposits of coal, is in the city, and will start for the ould country soon, having fallen heir to a fortune across the waters. Before going, he will offer his coal lands for sale. He assures us, however, that nothing short of fifty thousand dollars will purchase them."

"Blast the bloody spalpeen!" Pat exclaimed. "Phy the divil didn't he put the M. P. along wid me name, as I told him to? Well, it don't matter much, anyhow. If I can get the fifty thousan' dollars, that's ivery bit I care. Then I'll be goin' back to the ould country, and live at me 'ase."

"Begorra! phat a fool that Sol Sharpe was to give me the money, indade. He might 'a' knowed twelve thousan' dollars would timpt the divil himself to drink howly wather. Faith, an' he'll know better the next time."

"Bad luck to me, tho'; I don't feel hardly right 'bout sellin' the place ag'in, whin I was to buy it in for the young mistress. An' thin, too, if Sharpe was to foind me, shure he'd raise the divil wid me. So I must sell the place and skip out, before he foinds out that Pat Murphy and Tim Trainor are one and the same person."

"The more I think av it, the onasier I get, so I think I'll go out an' take a stroll for the benefit av me health. An' shure, how the gurls will stare and say, 'Ah, there, me dear!' But, faith, I'll not notice 'em at all. An' the boys—if one o' them young omadhauns shies a potato at me, I'll have 'em arrested and git me name in the papers as the Honorable Mister Trainor, M. P., from Tipperary."

But Pat did not get the opportunity to take the walk as he had calculated on.

He was about to leave the room, when the colored waiter knocked at the door.

"Gen'man to see you, sir!" he said, when Pat answered the summons. "Here's his card, sir."

Pat received the card and glanced at the name, which was written in a large, bold hand:

"SENATOR BLACK,

"Colorado."

"A sinator, is it?" muttered Pat. "Go ahead, nagur, an' show him up!"

The servant disappeared, while Pat took a seat in an easy-chair, elevated his feet to the top of a table, and lighted a cigar.

Mr. Black, of Colorado, was directly ushered into the room.

He was a large-built man, had sandy hair, and heavy beard of the same color.

He wore a rough kersey suit, felt hat and boots, and looked more like a Western ranchman than a senator.

The new-comer took a seat without giving Pat any chance to extend an invitation to do so, and proceeded to size up the self-styled M. P. inquiringly.

"How d'ye do, sor?" Pat said, not favorably impressed with the appearance of his visitor. "So you're a sinator, hey?"

"Yas, I'm Ben Black, senator from Colorado," was the gruff response. "You're Timothy Trainor, I s'pose."

"I am thet same, sor—Timothy Trainor, M. P., from Tipperary!"

"I understand you have a tract of Pennsylvania coal land to sell."

"Yis, I have."

"How long have you had it?"

"Only a short time, sor. I bought it on speckellation!"

"Who did you buy it of?"

"I bought it at auction, sor."

"Who formerly owned it?"

"A man who went to sea, yer Honor, an' niver came back again."

"What was his name?"

"Shure, an' I belave it was Hubert Hayden." "Hayden, eh? So you purchased the land at auction?"

"Yis. There was another son-of-a-sea-cook by the name of Cook, who wanted to buy it, but I outbid him."

"How much did you pay for the place?"

"Nine thousand dollars."

"Did you know there was a valuable coal deposit on the land when you bought it?"

"To be shure I did. Is there any more questions ye'd be askin'?"

For Pat was really beginning to feel a little inquisitive at the man's inquisitiveness.

"Of course there are!" Mr. Black, of Colorado, assured, "and you will find it to your advantage to answer my queries. Where did you get this large amount of money with which to purchase this place?"

"That's my business!"

"Take care, sir. Remember you're talkin' with Ben Black of Colorado now—the man who never takes bluff. You answer my questions, sir, or I'll blow your skull in two!"

And as evidence that he "meant business," the senator drew a revolver from his pocket, and laid it on the table, close at hand, thereby in no way lessening Pat's alarm, for if there was one thing he had a horror of, more than another, it was deadly weapons.

"Begorra, yez wouldn't dare to shoot me!" he said, endeavoring to retain courage. "The police would arrest yez!"

"To the blazes with the police! Why, I'd as lief shoot you as look at you. And I'll do it, too, if you don't answer me. D'ye know who I am?"

"Shure, you said your name was Black!"

"Waal, it ain't. My name is Hubert Hayden!"

"Hubert Hayden!" gasped Pat.

"That's what I said."

"Thin, are you the daddy av me young mis-thr—"

Here Pat stopped short, in confusion at the blunder he had made.

"Yes, I'm the daddy of your young mis-thr—" the Westerner repeated, with a grim laugh. "Pat Murphy, your rascally game won't work. I'm up to your Trainor game. Now, then, tell me who gave you the money with which to purchase my farm, or, as sure as the sun shines, I'll put a bullet through your thick head!" and he worked the revolver menacingly.

"Yes, yes. Don't shoot, and I'll tell you. A feller by the name of Sol Sharpe give me the money."

"Ah! he did, eh?"

"Yes, sor."

"How much did he give you? Tell the truth, now, and save yourself from going to prison."

"It was twelve thousand dollars, sor."

"You paid nine for the place?"

"Yis, sor."

"Did Sharpe tell you to bid in the place?"

"Yes, he did."

"For my daughter?"

"Shure, he didn't say. He give me the money, sor, an' told me to buy in the place, that's all."

"And, now, when he intended to bid in the place for my daughter, you were going to try and sell it again, pocket the proceeds and quit the country. But your scheme has failed, Patrick. Where is my daughter, Capitola?"

"Shure I don't know, sor. She run away from home before the sale."

"And you are positive you don't know where she is?"

"Faith, an' shure, sor."

"Where is the rest of the money, left over from the purchase of the Black Diamond Farm?"

"I have only twenty-five hundred of it left, sir."

"Give it to me!"

"Begorra! phat shall I give it to you, for?"

"Because I demand it. Refuse, and I'll have you in jail within an hour!"

With a crestfallen countenance, Pat produced the money, and paid it over to the last dollar.

"Now, then," the rough visitor said, "be kind enough to produce the deed to Black Diamond Farm."

Pat obeyed promptly. His only thought now was for his personal safety.

When the visitor had received the document, and examined it, he produced from his pocket a fountain-pen and wrote on the back of the document:

"I hereby assign all rights, titles and interests I may have acquired by virtue of this deed."

"There, Patrick, is the first thing for you to do to save you from a railroad ride up to Sing Sing," said the other, decisively. "Put your signature there!"

"An' what the devil does it all m'ane?" demanded the frightened Irishman, but at the same time taking the proffered pen.

"means restitution of stolen property, and lucky you are to escape the grip of the law for trying to defraud my daughter, and stealing Sol Sharpe's money. Sign, or take the consequences!" and again his right hand seized the revolver.

Pat hesitated no longer, but scratched his name to the assignment in a bold, rough hand, as if he, too, "meant business."

"There, Pat, that saves you wearing a convict's garb instead of the fine suit you are masquerading in," remarked the visitor, pocketing the paper. "My advice to you is to leave the city at once and to keep out of Sol Sharpe's way, for he'll run you in, sure, if he gets his eyes on you."

And with this parting injunction, the man arose and left the room.

As for Pat, he sat staring at the floor, his face most gloomy indeed. His air-castle had been suddenly demolished, and he was alone in the great metropolis, with very little cash in his pocket!

Truly he had reaped the reward of sin for his contemplated dishonesty!

But, for all that had happened, the Irishman could not disabuse his mind of the impression that he had been "sold"—that some one else than Hubert Hayden had been his unwelcome visitor.

CHAPTER X.

HUBERT HAYDEN.

THE narrow street in which Sol Sharpe had been accosted by the urchin, was lined on either side by big storage warehouses, and as these establishments closed their doors before six o'clock, there was no travel on the thoroughfare after that, except now and then by a policeman, or some belated straggler.

Sol followed his guide for about half a block, and then came to where a man was stretched out on the sidewalk.

Kneeling beside him, the detective perceived that he was a large, powerfully-built person, with a smooth face and iron-gray hair, and was probably about fifty years of age.

His attire was that of an ordinary sailor, and his sunburnt face bespoke the fact that he had only recently left the sea.

There was an ugly cut on the back of his head, which had bled freely, both over his clothing and on the sidewalk.

He was insensible when Sol reached him, and all efforts to arouse him proved futile.

"He's unconscious," Sol said, addressing the urchin. "What's your name, bub?"

"Sandy Myers, sir."

"Do you know where there's a hack-stand around here?"

"No, sir."

"Then go get a policeman and have him fetch an ambulance. This fellow is badly hurt!"

The boy skurried away, and Sol once more tried to arouse the man, but it was no use, he remained as insensible as a log.

It was while Sol was pursuing his investigation, that a policeman came running up, club in hand, from the opposite direction in which the boy had gone.

"Aha! I've caught you at it, have I?" he roared, grabbing Sol by the shoulder. "Oh! ye bloody highway robber, ye! I'll make an example of ye now, so I will! I'll teach ye to assault and rob men on the dark streets, ye murderin' imp!"

"Take your hand off my shoulder!" Sol ordered, promptly, "or I'll show you whether you've got me or not. I've nothing to do with this man's plight."

"Oh! ye hav'n't, eh?"

"No! I haven't. I was summoned here a few minutes ago by a boy who found the man here."

"Bah! That won't go down! You've got the wrong chap to handle ye now. I'll just walk ye off to the station in great shape."

"I command you to release me, sir! I am a detective, and not responsible for this man's injuries. Let me go, or it will be the worse for you!"

"Ho! ho! Listen to you now!" grinned the officer, increasing his grip. "If you're a detective, where's your badge?"

"There!" replied Sol, exposing it.

"Bah! You picked it up somewhere! Where's the boy you spoke about?"

"I sent him for an officer and an ambulance."

"Hoot! That's a likely story. Come along now. The judge will settle with ye to-morrow!"

And he made an attempt to pull Sol along with him, but, with one sweep of his left hand, Sol struck the officer a blow between the eyes, that no doubt made him see stars, for he released his grip and tumbled to the ground.

Presuming that it would not be well for him to remain longer in that locality, Sol then took to his heels and ran off.

The next morning the papers contained a graphic account of how one Policeman McNally had found a man rifling the pockets of his in-

sensible victim, whom he had knocked down how the noble policeman had come to the rescue and endeavored to arrest the footpad, but had also been knocked down by the ruffian, who then made good his escape.

The policeman had not been injured seriously, stated the account, but the other man had an ugly scalp wound on top of the head, and having been removed to the — Hospital, was still in a comatose condition there.

His dress was that of a sailor, and in a pocket in his undershirt he carried a large sum of money; but, aside from the initials "H. H." on his collar, no clew to his identity was obtainable.

Sol purchased the different papers, and read the accounts in them, but they were all about alike, and none of them made any reference to himself, which was greatly to his satisfaction.

During the forenoon he called at the hospital, and obtained admittance to the ward where the sailor had been placed.

When Sol arrived, he was sitting up in an easy-chair, with his head done up in bandages.

He was rigged out in a wrapper, and did not look particularly the worse for his injury, except that he was a trifle pale.

By good luck, Sol got a chance to speak to him when there were no other attendants close at hand.

"You're the gentleman who was found in B— street, last night, are you not?" Sol asked.

"So I am told," was the reply.

"How came you to be going through such a dismal street? and who assaulted you?"

"I had got rather bewildered, sir, and did not know which way I was going, when some one came up behind me and struck me on the head. I do not know who it was, for I lost my senses, and knew no more until I found myself here."

"Were you robbed of anything?"

"Only of a wallet containing a small amount of money. The rest of my money was secreted in a pocket in my undershirt."

"Lucky for you. Have you been long in town?"

"I just returned here yesterday, from Australia, by the way of San Francisco."

"Had you been in Australia long?"

"Yes, for a number of years, working in the mines."

"Ah! The papers state that the initials 'H. H.' are marked upon your collar."

"Yes. They are the initials of my name."

"Indeed? Can it be possible that my suspicion may be true?" Sol exclaimed. "If so, you are Captain Hubert Hayden!"

"Correct. I am Hubert Hayden, and for years was a sea-captain, before landing in Australia. But how comes it you should guess my name? I do not know that I ever saw you before."

"Nor did you," Sol replied. "If you will listen, however, I will relate to you how I came to know anything of you, or your affairs."

The captain signified his readiness to listen; so Sol took a seat and narrated all about his adventures up around Black Diamond farm, and what had occurred, even to Capitola's probable flight to New York.

"My poor child!" the captain said, gravely, when Sol had finished. "This is bad news you have brought me, sir. And you say you have as yet found no trace of her?"

"No. I only returned to the city last night, and have not had much time to look for her!"

"Well, no time must be lost now. She must be found, if we have to move heaven and earth. I did not suppose so much promptness would be made regarding the sale of Black Diamond farm, or I should have left Frisco a few days earlier than I did. I intended to give my daughter a glad surprise, else I should have telegraphed of my coming."

"You would have saved the loss of your farm if you had come sooner, and I would be twelve thousand dollars in pocket!" Sol declared. "I care not so much about the loss of the money, however, if we can only find your daughter, before she falls into the clutches of that man Cook, whom I know to be a villain."

"Never fear; you shall have your money back!" Hubert Hayden replied. "And if you help me find my child, you shall be well paid. It is also necessary to find this man Trainor, who purchased my farm, for I mean to have the farm back at all hazards."

"Very well. I mean to devote the balance of to-day in searching for the two men. Once I strike the trail, it will not take me long to follow it. How long are you booked here at the hospital?"

"The surgeon said that the cut on my head did not necessitate my being confined here for any particular length of time, but that he should advise me to remain a day or so, until I regained some of my lost strength; for I am quite weak from an excessive loss of blood."

"The surgeon is right. You remain here, and keep quiet. If I should need you for anything, I will either come in person, or will send for you."

"Then you will try to find my child?"

"Rest assured of that. I will make a diligent search, and if she is in Gotham, you can bet I will find her."

"God bless you! I am glad I have secured so warm a friend, and you shall be well paid for all your trouble!" the captain said, gratefully.

Sol left the hospital.

"So far, so good!" he mused. "Now then, to find one of four persons—Colonel Cook, Mott Street Mag, Timothy Trainor, and Pat Murphy. I think I'll try to find my royal Uncle Levi first. He may be able to accommodate his beloved nephew with a handful of information!"

CHAPTER XI.

AT ROCKY HALL.

LET us return to Capitola.

It is now two weeks since she left her home to come to the great metropolis, and we find her still an inmate of Miss Araminta Arlington's room.

It was late at night, and a candle upon the table gave the cheerless place the only light it had.

Capitola sat by the one window, gazing despondently down into the street below, where a gas-lamp gave but a feeble light.

The only sounds were the discordant cries of a lot of children playing "tag" on the sidewalk.

Capitola was alone, and traces of tears upon her cheeks showed that she had been weeping.

Late as was the hour, she had only recently come in from the street.

All day long she had wandered about the city in search of employment, but without any satisfactory result.

No one wanted any help, nor did she meet with the least encouragement wherever she applied.

To make matters still worse, she had the day previous, in some mysterious manner, lost her pocket-book.

On retiring, the night of her loss, she had counted over her money and put the pocket-book securely away in her pocket.

The next day, she and Araminta started out together to look for work, but became separated, and it was not until Capitola began to think of getting some dinner that she felt for the book and made the alarming discovery that she had lost it.

Of course, she never suspected for a moment that it had been stolen from her by Araminta, for Araminta had been exceedingly kind to her, the two having searched for Mrs. Sarah Smith until it seemed useless to search any longer, as every Sarah Smith they found had proven to be not the one sought for.

So Capitola had become discouraged and given up the search.

When she found that her little sum of money was gone, she became nearly distracted; but that night Araminta had cheered her up somewhat and encouraged her to try for work again to-day, which she had done, but with no success.

Araminta had not yet returned, and as the forlorn girl sat alone in the cheerless room, she was indeed disconsolate and unhappy.

Not only had she searched for her aunt, but had applied to the chief of police for aid in finding her.

And, as for Sol Sharpe, she had lost his card and forgotten his address, and therefore did not know where to look for him.

"Oh! if I were only dead!" she murmured, as she gazed at the flickering lamplight far below; "how much better off I would be. I should then be free from all the disappointments and sufferings of this wicked world. I have no one to live for; I am all alone, friendless and penniless, and God only knows what I shall do. I cannot longer stay here on Araminta's hospitality, for she is poor herself, and has hard pinching to get along. Oh! what shall I do?—what shall I do?"

It was indeed a blank outlook, and tears once more filled Capitola's pretty eyes.

She was weeping softly to herself, when she felt a hand laid upon her shoulders.

Uttering a startled cry, she looked around, expecting of course to see that Araminta had stolen in upon her unawares.

Her heart sunk within her, however, when she perceived a man standing in her presence—a tall, well-formed person, of middle age, with dark curling hair, a full beard of the same hue, and pleasant eyes that smiled down upon the alarmed girl admiringly.

He was attired in a handsome suit, silk hat, and patent-leather shoes, and wore jewels of great value upon his person.

"Be not alarmed, young lady," he said, pleasantly, "and I trust you will excuse me, for until I beheld your face I took you for Miss Arlington. I must have made a mistake, and opened the wrong door."

"This is Miss Arlington's room, sir!" Capitola said, as soon as she could command her voice.

"I am simply staying with her."

"Ah! I see! Miss Arlington is not in, then?"

"No, sir. She went out in search of employment, and has not yet returned. I do not know what can keep her so long."

"I trust she will soon come," the man said, helping himself to a chair, "and if wishing will do any good, I shall hope that she has not succeeded in getting employment."

"Indeed?" Capitola said, in surprise. "Why should you wish that, sir?"

"For the very good reason that I have a situation open for her myself," was the smiling reply of the bearded stranger.

"Araminta has been in my employ on several different occasions, and always on my return to the metropolis, I re-employ her, to take charge of my house. She is a model young woman."

"She has been a very good friend to me," Capitola replied, not knowing what else to say.

"Oh, she's always kind," declared the visitor. "You may have heard her mention me. My name is Major Montford Moss."

"Yes, sir, I have heard her speak of you."

"Just so. Araminta always speaks well of me, you see, because I pay her good wages, and am always prompt on pay-day. Then, too, I have had kind of an idea that Araminta has cherished a hope that she might some day become Mrs. Moss. But, bless me, I've been an old bachelor so long, that I should not know how to get along with a wife. Ah! that's Araminta's step, now. I'd know it among a hundred!"

Footsteps were indeed heard coming up the stairs, and an instant later Araminta came into the room.

She uttered a glad cry as she saw the major, and rushed forward and greeted him effusively.

"Why, major, how delighted I am to see you!" she exclaimed. "I've been wishing to see you ever since I came back to the city. When did you arrive in town?"

"Only yesterday. I returned from Saratoga last week, but have been out on Long Island, where I have rented a fine old country-seat, overlooking the Sound. There I intend to make my future home."

"Oh! that will be ever so nice! And you will give up your New York residence?"

"I have already done so, and, Araminta, I have come for you to take the position of housekeeper for my new abode. It's a fine old place, romantically situated, and I am sure you will like it."

"But I can't go!" Araminta declared.

"Can't go?" echoed the major. "And why not? I have depended much on getting you to take charge of my household. Surely, you have not obtained a situation you prefer to the one I can offer you?"

"Well, no, major, but, you see, I can't leave the city. I have got a new responsibility to look after. This young lady, Miss Hayden, is my protégée, and I can't go off and leave her. Oh! no; you'll have to look up another housekeeper, major."

"Oh! Miss Arlington!" Capitola spoke up quickly, "do not think of refusing the situation on my account. Indeed you must accept it! I can get along somehow, and really you must not let me deter you!"

"Oh, you dry up!" Araminta said, commandingly. "You are under my wing, Cap, and it's a cold day when I go back on you. So, Major Moss, if you want me to preside over your home, just understand that you've got to take my companion too! She can sweep, make beds, play the piano, and attend to the canary birds, and I'll do the rest!"

"Why, nothing in the world will suit me better!" the major hastened to say. "I've been wondering where I could get a good second girl, and without a doubt your friend will be just the

person. So it's all settled, without any further parley. Pack up your traps in a hurry, and we will start for Rocky Hall as soon as may be."

"What! not to-night?" Araminta exclaimed.

"Yes, to-night. I have a hack waiting near at hand to carry us, and we will reach Rocky Hall by midnight. So get ready and I will wait for you down-stairs."

And so saying, the major bowed himself out of the room.

"Oh! Miss Arlington!" Capitola said, when he had gone, "really I do not feel as if I ought to accompany you to this man's house. I do not know very much about housework, and then—then—"

"Then what?" demanded Araminta, hustling about.

"I—I—don't know, miss, only I'm afraid."

"Afraid of what? What in the world's got into you? Why, there's nothing to be afraid of. You'll get four dollars a week for doing literally nothing. And what better do you want, to be sure? So, of course, you're going along. You'd be a weak one to let such a chance slip. I'll see that you live like a lady, and there's no telling that the major will not get struck on you and marry you!"

"I presume I should have something to say about that!" Capitola retorted. "If I go, I shall do the work assigned me, but shall expect to be treated with the respect due me."

"Of course you will. The major is a perfect gentleman, and you need have no fear but what everything will be all right. So now hurry up and pack up your things."

Not without considerable anxiety lest she was not doing right, Capitola obeyed.

She had but few preparations to make, and it was the same with Araminta. Accordingly, the two were soon ready, and descended to the street, where they found the major waiting.

He escorted them to a neighboring corner, where they entered a hack drawn by two horses and manned by a colored driver, and were whirled away rapidly through the city.

Brooklyn Bridge was crossed, and still they kept on until the lights of the City of Churches had been left far behind and they were away out in the country.

Araminta and the major occupied the same seat and kept up a rambling conversation for awhile; then they became quiet.

On, on went the hack swiftly, and with her face pressed against the window-pane Capitola peered out whenever they passed through some quiet little hamlet where the people were all in bed.

At last, after miles had been traversed, and it seemed as if the lonely journey would never end, day began to dawn, and by the time it was quite light the hack drew up before a quaint old stone farm-house which stood upon a high bluff overlooking Long Island Sound.

The house was evidently untenanted, for the shutters were closed and there was no one to be seen about the premises.

"Here we are at our future home," Major Moss said, as he got out of the hack. "Get out, ladies, and tell me if you don't think this a darling place."

Both Capitola and Araminta agreed with the major, when they got a better view of the place.

The house was surrounded by shade and a fine garden, and the view of the Sound was beautiful.

After the ladies had viewed the fine surroundings the major dismissed the hack, unlocked the house, and they entered.

It was a well-furnished dwelling, old though its exterior proclaimed it, and boasted of many modern improvements.

"Oh! It's a grand place," the major announced, enthusiastically, "with only one drawback."

"What is that?" queried Araminta.

"Well, it's kind of lonely, that's all. You see, it's some distance off the main road, and there are no neighbors within sight. However, we'll get along all right. Ay! ay! we will get along famously. If you will step up-stairs, ladies, I will show you the rooms I have assigned you for your own occupancy."

So they went up stairs.

Opening a door near the head of the stairs, Moss said:

"This will be your room, Miss Hayden. Step inside and see how you like it."

Not suspecting the surprise that was in store for her, Capitola obeyed, and as she did so the door was shut behind her and she heard the key turn in the lock.

Then she became aware that she was entrapped and a prisoner!

CHAPTER XII.

WAS IT A DECOY?

SOL SHARPE sat in his room, in Great Jones street, looking decidedly in an uncomfortable frame of mind.

Nearly three weeks had now elapsed since his return to the city, and in that time he had accomplished literally nothing toward finding Capitola Hayden, although his search had been constant and determined.

Mr. Hayden, now in citizen's attire, sat near the detective, his face buried moodily in his hands, for Sharpe had but recently come in with the announcement that it was his opinion that neither Colonel Cook nor Capitola was in the city.

"Then is all hope of ever finding them forever lost?" the grief-stricken captain demanded.

"It kind o' looks that way," Sol confessed. "You know we've about exhausted every means in our power to find them, quietly, and the only course I can now see is to put the matter into the hands of the metropolitan force, and let them figure on it!"

"No! no! I do not want my child's name on every tongue!" Hayden protested. "Once a girl gets her name into the newspapers she loses more than she gains by the notoriety. No! we must find her!"

"Humph! But if we can't find her, we can't!" Sol exclaimed, impatiently. "It isn't often I give in, but I'm not ashamed to own that I've tackled a sticker at last. Not only has my uncle carefully covered up his trail, but also that of his victim and his coadjutors. If Cook were in the city, I should surely have spotted him at some of his old-time resorts—and the same with Mott Street Mag. My idea is they have learned that I am on their track, and have departed to some other city."

"But how could they force my daughter to go with them, without attracting attention?"

"Ah! there are more ways than one for arranging such matters. Ha!"

The detective, who was seated by the window, suddenly sprang to his feet.

"What's the matter?" Hayden demanded.

"Come here, quick! Do you see that man?"

He pointed down to the street, where a roughly dressed man had paused to light his pipe—a burly individual, with dark hair and beard, and ruffianly aspect.

"I see him!" Hayden replied. "What of it? Who is he?"

"He is Dave Dolan, the chap who is in league with Cook and Mott Street Mag, and the same who attempted to carry off your daughter, near Black Diamond Villa!"

"The deuce you say! Then we must nab him at once, for no doubt he knows where Capitola is!"

"Easy now!" Sol warned. "If I am not greatly mistaken, that fellow has not stopped there for nothing. He has lit his pipe, but don't appear to be of any particular inclination to move on. Let's see what he's up to, anyhow!"

Dave Dolan, for it was indeed he, had lit his pipe, and then proceeded to lean up against a lamp-post and enjoy a smoke, while his gaze leisurely took in his surroundings.

He surveyed the houses on either side of the street, rather inquiringly, all except the one in which Sol and Hayden were domiciled. Never once did he cast a glance up toward the window where the detective and ex-captain were eager observers of his movements.

As the minutes passed Dolan continued to draw away at his pipe, taking keen notice of whoever passed him.

When his tobacco was exhausted, he knocked the ashes from the pipe, restored it to his pocket, and then motioned to a bootblack, who came along, and had his boots polished.

While the boy was engaged in this performance, Dolan appeared to be conversing with him; but what passed between them, of course Sol or Hayden had no means of knowing.

After paying for his shine, Dolan once more leaned up against the lamp-post, as before, and took to watching the people who passed by.

"Well, I'll be blamed if I can understand his game!" Sol declared to Hayden. "That he is down there for a purpose is evident, and I am satisfied also that he knows I live up here, from the fact that he does not look up this way."

"Perhaps he has been set to watch us?"

"Maybe so, but I fail to see what the object can be!"

About all they could do was to surmise, until Dolan should make some definite move; so they relaxed into silence.

If Dolan had been a paid sentinel, he could not have kept closer to the lamp-post.

A policeman came along and gave him a

sharp glance, but passed on without molesting him.

Finally a man came along the street, and pausing, tapped Dolan on the shoulder.

It was Pat Murphy, in his dudish attire!

Changed though was his appearance from what it was when Sol had last seen him, he had no difficulty in recognizing him.

"It's Pat Murphy!" he cried—"the infernal scamp I gave the twelve thousand dollars to. Keep watch of them, captain, while I disguise myself."

Perhaps no hawkshaw in New York had a better outfit of disguises than Sol Sharpe, and being quick of movement, he soon had himself made up as a rough-looking laboring man of German nationality.

"There! *Wie gahts!* How you was sometimes all der vile!" he demanded, when he had finished. "Now, then, here is a suit to fix you out, Hayden. Hurry and prepare yourself."

The captain obeyed, while Sol took a position where he could command a view of the sidewalk below.

Dave Dolan and Pat appeared to be engaged in an interesting discussion of some sort, for both stood closely face to face.

"I begin to see into the whole affair!" Sol said, grimly. "That infernal Irishman was bought over, and is now in Cook's employ. And, judging by his present rig-out, he's been using some of my money to make a swell of himself. So sure's my name is Sol Sharpe, I'll swell his head for him! I'd like to know what the two rascals are planning."

The consultation between the two soon ended, by Dolan's giving Pat a slip of paper, and then turning, he started off down the street.

"There! there! he goes!" Captain Hayden said, excitedly. "Surely you're not going to let him escape, Sharpe?"

"You keep still!" Sol commanded, quickly. "I want to see what Irish is up to. If we find your daughter, we must depend on him!"

When Dolan was gone, Pat Murphy proceeded to examine the paper that had been given him, and thus occupied several minutes.

He then motioned to an urchin that was playing in the street.

When the boy approached, he gave him the paper and some silver and said something to him, after which the boy crossed the street, and entered the hall-door that led up to Sol Sharpe's room.

"The kid is coming up here with a message, I'll bet," the detective decided.

And, sure enough, soon came a rap on the door.

Both Sol and Hayden hastened to answer the summons.

"Is Mister Sharpe live heer?" the urchin asked, when the door was opened.

"Yes, boy," Sol replied. "What do you want?"

"Heer's a paper for you, sir."

And having delivered the message, the gamin skurried away to invest his money in cigarettes.

Sol quickly unfolded the sheet of ordinary note-paper, and he and Hayden together read the following:

"MISTER SOL SHARPE:—

"These is er few lines ter let yer no thet i am goin' tew do ye a good turn. My name is Dave Dolan, an' i have bin a purty hard nutin my time, but ain't goin' to be enny moar. I hev reformed an' am goin' to be a better man. Wot I wanter tel you iz that I kno wher the gal is. I mean Capitola Hayden. She is shet up in an oald house, way out in the country, a gud ways from enny place, an' is a prizner."

"Cunnel Cook has got her, an' he iz goin' ter make her marry him er kill her, as he kin get oald of her money. I hev tuk pity on the girl, an' if you will pay me sumthin' for my trouble, I'll take you to wher she be. If this is all right, an' you'll treat me white, I'll be white. If correck, come to Denny Dullon's saloon—Flushing avenue, Brooklyn, at six o'clock to-night, an' I'll sho' ye wher the gal is. Better fetch yer pop with ye, fer Mag an' the cunnel may sho' fite."

"Yours truly,

"DAVE DOLAN."

Sol Sharpe and Captain Hayden having finished reading the message, looked at each other inquiringly.

"Well, what do you think of that?" Hayden demanded, eagerly.

"I think it's a cleverly-conceived plot to get us into a trap!" Sol replied promptly.

"Pshaw! you're suspicious of everything."

"It's a part of my business to be so. Nevertheless, I think I can see through this game. One part of this message may be true. Colonel Cook may have taken refuge in some out-of-the-way place in the country; very likely he has, and hopes by keeping Capitola shut up, to coerce her into marrying him."

"However, you can bet the colonel pays Dolan well enough to insure his fidelity. The whole thing is a scheme to lure us into a trap. Although he has Capitola in his power, Cook does not feel safe while I am nosing around in search of him. His plan is to get me, and shut me up until he has succeeded in his plans."

"Still you may be wrong," Hayden insisted. "The worst criminals are often conscience-stricken and try to reform, and do a good turn by way of atonement for their past sins."

"Yes, but that kind of sinners are mighty scarce here in New York. Oh! it's plain enough to me that Dolan was sent here for the very purpose I have outlined."

"And what shall we do in that case?"

"Why, take in the picnic, to be sure! You stay here while I go down and interview the Irishman. He is in the plot no doubt, and I'll scare the life out of him, but what I'll find out what I want to know."

So saying, he hurriedly left the room.

When he reached the street, however, he found, to his disappointment, that Pat Murphy was nowhere in sight.

He hastily rushed from one corner to another, hoping to catch sight of him, but all to no use; the Irishman had disappeared as completely as though the earth had opened up and swallowed him.

Sol returned to his room, where the captain was anxiously waiting for him.

"You didn't find him, eh?"

"No. He evidently skinned out after giving the boy the message. Blame his picture, I'll spoil it for him the next time I lay eyes on him!"

"Very likely he will be smart enough to keep out of your way," the captain replied. "If you had taken my advice and arrested the man, we'd have gained one point at least."

"Humph. We've gained more than that already, as you will find out."

"Then you intend to meet this man Dolan in Brooklyn?"

"I certainly do. I'd be a fool to back out. We will meet him, and allow him to lead us almost into the trap set for us; then we'll turn on him and make him serve our purpose still further."

"But, are you not afraid that we may get ourselves into a fix we can't so easily get out of?"

"Bah! no. We will go well armed, and if it becomes necessary, we will do some tall shooting but what we will win the day. When we meet Dolan, we are not to let on, you see, but what we are perfectly confident that he is acting on the square. When he sees this he will be less on his guard, and we can handle him all the easier."

"As it is getting nearly time for us to start for Brooklyn, we had better get rid of these disguises and prepare for the work before us."

And this they accordingly did.

An hour later they were en route for Dennis Dullon's saloon.

Both were armed with self-cocking revolvers, and cords, in addition to which, Sol had brought along a couple of pairs of handcuffs.

He felt sure of victory now, and if he succeeded in capturing the colonel and Mott Street Mag, he meant to secure them beyond a possibility of escape.

CHAPTER XIII.

CAPITOLA AND HER CAPTOR.

POOR CAPITOLA.

Words can hardly describe the feeling of horror that swept over her, as she heard the door bang shut behind her, and the key turn in the lock, while, at the same time, a mocking laugh sounded from the hall outside, followed by the sound of retreating footsteps.

"My God! I am imprisoned!" she gasped, sinking down upon the nearest chair. "I have been lured to this lonely place for no good purpose, and by the very person I most abhor! Oh! I see it all now. It has been a bold scheme to entrap me from the beginning. This Major Moss is really Colonel Cook, and Araminta is his accomplice. How blind I have been not to see this before! Oh, Heaven protect me, for I am indeed at the mercy of a human fiend!"

The room she had entered was a spacious apartment, with two windows that overlooked the valley, and was handsomely furnished.

Among other things, there were easy-chairs, pictures, a piano, and a stand of blooming flowers.

Indeed, every appointment was excellent.

But to guard against escape from the windows, strong iron bars had been imbedded into

casing, and so secured that they could not easily be removed.

These bars had evidently only recently been placed.

For several minutes Capitola sat gazing about her, pale and sick at heart. Then she summoned up courage, and arose and removed her wraps.

"It won't do me any good to give way to grief," she mused, quite sensibly. "It will become me far better to be brave, and meet this demon I have to deal with fearlessly. He probably thinks that, by shutting me up, he can gain my consent to marry him, but he shall find out how great is his mistake. I will live and die in this place before I will come to any terms he may try to make."

When she had laid off her wraps, she set about making a more thorough investigation of her quarters.

She found that the door was indeed firmly locked, and the iron bars so firmly placed at the windows that her slender hands could not remove them.

No one came near her all day long, nor did she hear any stir about other portions of the house.

When darkness approached, tired and dispirited, she threw herself down upon the sofa without undressing, and fell asleep.

It was broad daylight when she awakened with a start.

She was still in her parlor prison, and things looked just the same as when she laid down, except that upon a table, drawn near at hand, was a large tray, upon which was a steaming meal; sufficient in quantity to satisfy several persons of voracious appetites.

And to Capitola the repast looked most tempting.

There was a large plate of juicy roast meat, with several varieties of vegetables, fresh bread, butter and milk, berries, and a pot of fragrant coffee and a pitcher of cool water.

Before partaking of the food, Capitola subjected it to a careful examination, suspicious that it might have been drugged; but deciding that it could not be so "doctored," she ate a hearty breakfast, and had enough left to do her for the remaining two meals of the day.

That day passed, the same as had the previous one; and the next day was a repetition of the first and second.

Each morning, on awakening, she found a tempting meal awaiting her; but no one came within her sight or hearing.

It was all very strange, for she had naturally expected to receive a visit from her captor, Colonel Cook, or at least from Araminta; but neither had, thus far, shown any disposition to disturb her.

There was some consolation in this, at least.

During the fourth day of her imprisonment, however, Capitola heard a key turn in the lock, the door was opened, and Colonel Cook entered the room.

Locking the door after him, and putting the key in his pocket, he then advanced toward his prisoner, his arms folded across his breast, and a smile of triumph upon his sinister face.

Capitola had been seated near the window, but she quickly arose and seized a heavy iron poker, which had inadvertently been left in the room, and which she made it a point to keep near at hand.

There was a flash of firm resolve in her eyes that did not escape the colonel, and caused him to pause at a respectful distance.

"You had better stop right where you are, you villain!" Capitola cried. "I am not defenseless, as you see, and if you dare but to approach nearer, I will kill you if I can."

"Indeed? Why, you surprise me!" Cook replied. "Instead of this sort of a reception, my dear, I expected you would welcome me as a friend."

"Wretch! You succeeded in getting me into your trap, but that does not signify that I fear you!"

"Fear me? Why, of course you don't, nor do I want you to, my dear. Fear and love don't travel in the same boat, you see, so you could not love me, and yet fear me, at the same time!"

"Love you, inhuman monster? Why, I loathe and hate you!"

"Oh, pshaw! There's no use of such nonsense, for I know well to the contrary. And even if you didn't love me, it could not possibly make any difference, because I love you. I own I had to use a little strategy to get you into my power, but then that's nothing, for no doubt you know the old adage—'All's fair in love or in war!'"

"You'll find all's not fair in this case!" Cap

replied. "I'd die by my own hand before I'd yield to persuasion or force from such a reptile as you. So there is no use of keeping me shut up here. You are laying yourself liable to the law, and when I get free you shall receive the punishment you so richly deserve, you detestable scoundrel!"

"That may all be, my dear—that may all be!" and the villain laughed sarcastically. "When you get free, why I shall be willing to answer for any wrong I may be guilty of. But, you must bear in mind that there is not the least likelihood of your ever getting free, until you become Mrs. Levi Cook!"

"I tell you I will never marry you!"

"Bah! You'll change your mind all in good time. If you don't, why, it will be all the worse for you, and you will have no one to blame but yourself. If you don't believe this, listen:

"Here you are, shut up in this old farm-house, without friends, or any one to even know that you are here. The nearest habitation is fully a mile away, and no one ever comes here during the summer, as the owner and his family are then in Europe. Even did any one come this way, they would never suspect that I had a prisoner shut up here.

"You see I've managed everything nicely in regard to yourself. Every clew to your whereabouts is positively covered up. All that is known concerning you, is simply a supposition that you fled to New York. Your friend, Sol Sharpe, has searched Gotham high and low for you, and, failing to find you, has given up the search in disgust like a sensible man.

"There's not the least possibility of your making your escape. You are wholly in my power, to do with as I please.

"Now, I am not a bad man naturally, but I love you devotedly, and, long ago, set my heart on winning you for my wife. After my repeated protestations of love had been repulsed by you, my love became tenfold stronger, and I resolved at all hazards to win you, no matter whether by fair means or foul.

"So, seeing that I was in no likelihood of winning you at Black Diamond Villa, I laid plans that have resulted in bringing you here. Now, Capitola, once more I solemnly assure you that I love you, and my fondest hope and desire is to honorably make you my wife. Marry me, and I will be a true and devoted husband to you. We will then go back to Black Diamond Villa, and dwell in peace and happiness.

"Do not refuse me again, I beg of you, for it now lies in your power to make me a good and honorable man, or the opposite—a very devil! I am dead in earnest, and you alone can guide me into the path I shall pursue in the future!"

Capitola listened, her face pale, cold and impassive of expression.

"You have no need to appeal to me!" she said, when he had done. "As I have told you at least a dozen times before, I'd die sooner than marry you. My dislike for you is positive and unchangeable, and no pleading on your part can ever move me in the least. I will, however, do this: If you will set me at liberty, I will make no attempt to have you prosecuted for this matter!"

Cook laughed derisively.

"Why, you silly fool!" he cried, "I gave you credit for better sense than that. Do you for an instant suppose I would relinquish the prize I have worked so hard to possess myself of? If you do, you have made the greatest mistake of your life, I can assure you.

"You refuse my love, do you? Your dislike for me is positive and unchangeable? Well, so let it be!

"I'll tell you now what you can depend on. I'll give you twenty-four hours after six o'clock to-night to consent to marry me. If by that time you have not concluded to be so sensible, you die, and all trace of you will be forever lost, so far as this world is concerned. Close to this house is an old abandoned well. Once your body is at the bottom of this well, no one will ever find it, and I shall effectually have disposed of you. Then I shall marry a New York girl, who very much resembles you, and, after a time, go back to Black Diamond Villa, where she will come into your twenty thousand dollars, and no one will ever suspect the cheat. Ha, ha! You see I've got everything planned out to perfection, don't you?"

"Oh, you monster!" Capitola gasped. "Surely God will not let you live to carry out your murderous designs."

"Oh, yes, he will!" Cook replied, with a hard laugh. "So you can think over the prospects, and I guess by the time I call to see you again, you will have reconsidered your decision, and come to my terms. But, if you are still persist-

ent, and anxious to have an embrace with grim death, why, I will turn you over to the not very tender mercies of Dave Dolan, and what becomes of you thereafter I of course shall be entirely ignorant of. So now, adieu, my dear, until I come for your final answer."

He turned, and, unlocking the door, left the room, and Capitola heard the key revolve in the lock on the outside.

He was gone, and she was glad of it.

But what hope had his going left her?

None at all!

In plain terms, the villain had told her what would be her fate, if she still refused to marry him, when he came for her answer.

And could she doubt but what he would carry out his threat?

No, indeed! His was a heart that knew no mercy!—the heart of a hardened villain.

Dropping upon her knees, she uttered a silent prayer to her Maker for her preservation.

Would it be answered?

CHAPTER XIV.

TRAPPED!

It was quite six o'clock when Sol Sharpe and Hayden came in sight of Dennis Dullon's saloon on Flushing avenue.

It was a comparatively respectable-looking place on the outside, and judging from the empty beer-kegs that stood on the sidewalk, did a large trade in the German's favorite beverage.

"Now then, you remember that we are to show no signs that we doubt Dolan's good faith," Sol said before they reached the saloon. "If I find it necessary to cover him with our weapons, I'll give the signal by blowing my nose vigorously."

"All right. Go ahead."

They entered the saloon and found the place vacant of customers, while the landlord was tipped back in an arm-chair fast asleep.

"Hello! who runs this place?" Sol cried, pounding on the bar. "Wake up, old man, and give us some Dutch disturbance!"

"All right! all right!" replied Dullon, springing up and rubbing his eyes. "Faith, I guess I was purty near asleep. What is it, gents—whisky?"

"None of that stuff; give us some good lager!"

The beers were served, and then Sol and Hayden sat down at one of the tables with which the room was liberally supplied.

"Dolan don't seem to be around," Sol remarked. "We'll wait awhile, however, before we make any inquiries for him."

They had not long to wait, for the ruffian soon entered the saloon.

He espied Sol immediately and motioned him to come out of doors.

This the detective did, directing Hayden to remain behind.

"Who's that you've got with ye?" Dolan demanded, when they were outside the saloon.

"That is Capitola's father!" Sol replied.

"Bah! he's dead!"

"By no means. He has recently returned from Australia!"

"If I thought you were lying to me, I'd throw the whole job up!"

"I'm not. You do as you promised in the letter, and you have nothing to fear from us."

"Well, I intend to do just as I said!"

"Then we are ready to accompany you."

"But I want some money first. I can't afford to do this job for nothin', as I'm runnin' a big risk. You see, if the colonel gets a shot at me, after he finds I've give him away, it's all up with me."

"We'll see he don't hurt you. What is your price?"

"Well, I've got to hire a team to take ye out, an' spend my own time, and I allow it ought to be worth fifty dollars."

"Very well. Go get your team, and the fifty dollars shall be yours when you return."

"Correct. I'll be back in ten minutes," and Dolan hurried away.

In less than ten minutes he drove up in front of the saloon, with a pair of bays hitched before a two-seated surrey.

"Pile in!" he said to Sol and Hayden, who were waiting on the steps, and when they had obeyed, he drove away at a lively rate toward the limits of the city.

When they had proceeded a ways, Mr. Hayden took a fifty-dollar note from his pocket and handed it to Dolan, who acknowledged the receipt with a grim "Thank you!"

"How far have we got to go?" Sol queried, as the vehicle whirled along.

"Oh! quite a ways. We'll git thar about midnight, if nothing happens. The gal's confined in an old farm-house off the Sound."

"Ah! And Cook and Mott Street Mag are there, eh?"

"Yas."

"See here, Dolan; there's a couple of questions I want to ask. Who knocked me on the head and barreled me up some three weeks ago?"

"The colonel!"

"Are you sure it wasn't you?"

"Well, mebbe I did have a hand in it," was the grim reply. "I'm out o' that sort o' business now, however."

"That's right. You'll find it much better to lead a good life than a bad one. The other question is—where is the Irishman to whom you gave the note for me?"

"Oh! he's gone on ahead to the farm-house to reconnoiter, and will be handy by in case we need help!"

Sol refrained from asking any more questions, but Dolan appeared to be in a communicative mood:

"The young lady will be mighty glad to git free!" he said. "I felt sorry for her every time when I took the wittles to her, and when she finally got down on her knees, an' begged me to help her to escape, it was too much fer me, an' I told her I'd do it. An', when I sez I'll do a thing I'll allus do it!"

"That is noble of you!" Mr. Hayden said, who now fully believed in the fellow's honest intentions. "You assist me to release my child and I'll further reward you."

"All right, boss. You can bet you'll have yer gal as soon as we get to Rocky Hall!"

"How will Cook account for your absence from the farm-house?" queried Sol, who was still suspicious of the man.

"Why, you see, it was this way," Dolan answered: "The colonel was suspicious that you might be nosing too close on his trail, and so he sent me to New York to spy on you, and see what you were up to. It war just ther chance I wanted, an' so I— Well, heer you are, an' you know the rest. We'll have the gal afore many hours."

The answer was made so promptly, and with so much apparent candor, that Sol was almost tempted to believe that Dolan meant to carry out his promises after all.

The horses driven by Dolan were good travelers, and as the moon came up early, the drive through the picturesque rural districts of Long Island was decidedly enjoyable.

During the latter part of the journey Dolan maintained a grim silence, except when he chirped to the horses; and at precisely twelve o'clock, by Sol's watch, he drew rein.

The place where he stopped was where a little-traveled wood-road branched off into a body of forest land.

"Ye kin git out here," he said, turning and addressing Sol and Hayden.

"I'll drive the team a bit into the woods out o' sight, an' then we'll finish the journey on foot. Et ain't fur we've got to go."

Accordingly Sol and the captain got out, and Dolan drove away up the fork road.

"I ain't sure but what the fellow wants to keep his word after all!" Sol remarked. "He appears honest enough at any rate, but, I'm on guard all the same."

"Oh! I am perfectly satisfied that he means all right, and have been ever since you received the message," Mr. Hayden asserted with enthusiasm.

"Well, here he comes. It won't be long now until we know whether he is cream or sour milk."

Dolan came up, saying:

"I've hitched the hosses, an' they'll be ready when we want 'em. We must approach the house like cats, for the colonel is not a sound sleeper and is liable to awaken at a slight noise. Now, you foller an' do as I do," Dolan ordered. "First, though, tell me, do you want to capture the colonel and Mag, or simply release the girl?"

"We want to capture them, of course!" Sol replied.

Dolan scratched his head a moment as if reflecting, and then, with a grunt, led off, Sol and Hayden bringing up the rear.

They proceeded cautiously toward the farm-house, and in five minutes time stood upon the front piazza.

"Wait here until I make a reconnoissance," Dolan said. "By getting up a ladder at the rear of the house, I can tell if the colonel is in bed or not!"

He stole away, but speedily returned.

"All correct!" he announced. "Now, follow me, cautiously, and I will fix things."

He then lifted a trap-door in the floor of the piazza, and a stairway descending into the cellar was revealed.

"Careful, now," he cautioned, as he took the lead. "A misstep may spoil all!"

They followed. Sol Sharpe keeping his hand on his revolver, ready at an instant's warning.

In a moment the trio stood in the darkness of the cellar.

"Stand still, now!" Dolan whispered, "til I find a lantern. If you've got any revolvers with ye you'd better grip 'em, so in case we're surprised ye can shute!"

Dolan was heard groping around in the darkness and muttering anathemas against the lantern, which it appeared he could not find.

Suddenly, to his great astonishment, Sol felt the revolvers snatched from his grasp!

At the same instant the light of a large bull's-eye lantern illumined the scene.

Then the detective saw that he had not mistrusted Dolan without cause, for they were trapped!

Dolan stood a few feet in front of the detective, covering him with his own weapons, while Colonel Cook performed the same service in front of Captain Hayden.

Near at hand stood Mott Street Mag, holding the lantern.

"Move an inch, and you're dead men!" the colonel cried, sternly. "We've got you dead to rights now, and your only show is to cave! Dolan, shoot the infernal detective down if he attempts to move a muscle! You, Mag, put down the lantern, and bind the precious pair hand and foot!"

Mag hastened to obey, and in a few minutes had performed the job according to directions, and Sol and the captain were prisoners, indeed.

They offered no resistance, well knowing that they would be shot down if they did.

So, both maintained a grim silence, until Mag had finished binding them.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

WHEN Mag had finished her work, Colonel Cook said:

"Now, then, my fine pair of hounds, you see the trouble you have brought upon yourselves by trying to play in a game with a thoroughbred. Ha, ha! You would come here, and attempt to wrest my prize from me, would you? You thought you had a soft snap, didn't you, when my noble coadjutor, Dolan, offered to help you do what you couldn't do yourselves? You, sir—to Sol—"you, sir, are a detective, but a disgrace to the profession. Despite your name, you are not sharp in the least, and, as it chances that you and I are slightly related, I truly am ashamed of you. Why, you really don't know enough to keep your head out of the fire. It would have pleased me much better if you had exhibited a little intelligence in your search for me!"

"Perhaps I may get the chance to hire instructions from you!" Sol retorted, grimly.

"So? Well, I don't know about that. I've come to the conclusion that you're no good, anyhow, and so I am going to put you where you will be likely to stay, until the resurrection day. And as you may be lonely, I shall send your companion along with you."

"As for you, Hayden, you got back from Australia just in time to find a tomb beneath your native Northern skies. Now, there's one thing I want to particularly impress upon your mind: Don't worry about the welfare of your lovely daughter. Don't worry about her in the least, sir."

"Capitola and I have got everything satisfactorily arranged, and we shall be married tomorrow afternoon. We shall then go direct to Black Diamondville and live at our ease. The twenty thousand dollars coming to Capitola when she is of age, will keep us nicely. I mention these facts lest you have some qualms about leaving this earthly sphere on her account!"

"You infernal wretch! If I ever get free I'll murder you!" Hayden cried.

"Oh! no fear of your ever getting free!" Cook retorted, confidently. "There's a deep well on these premises, and the bottom of this well will be the future abode of you and your detective friend. You can live there until you get tired of it, and then you can do the next best thing you can think of. The well will be boarded and sodded over, and there is little likelihood that any one may come to your rescue!"

The colonel then turned to Dolan.

"Dolan!" he ordered, "you go and attach the long rope to the windlass. Mag, you go and lend him what assistance you can."

"All right, boss! I'll fix things. Come on, gal!" and he and Mag left the cellar.

"Oh! you'll find yourself in a barrel you can't break out of this time, Solomon!" the colonel

chuckled, when they had gone. "I don't suppose you and I will meet soon again, but if you encounter any of my friends where you are going, give 'em my regards. I am—"

"Throw up yer hands, ye murderin' son av a sea-cook, or you're a dead man!"

Clear and stern sounded the order, and the colonel wheeled with an oath, coming face to face with Pat Murphy!

And in Pat's hands were clutched a pair of socked six-shooters, leveled full at the crook.

"Drop them pops!" ordered Pat, "an' throw up your hands, or I'll plug yez so full o' holes you'll answer fer a sieve. An' mind yez, not a squawk, or I'll shoot an eye out o' yez, ye thafe of Satan!"

Cook obeyed, sullenly.

Then, still keeping him covered, Pat drew a knife and severed the cords that bound Sol's wrists, after which Sol took the knife and set both himself and Captain Hayden at liberty.

The colonel was then bound, and, when a few minutes later Dolan and Mag returned to the cellar, they were gathered in.

Thus the evil trio were in the toils at last, thanks to Pat; and, a few minutes later, Capitola was released from her parlor prison and restored to the arms of her father whom she had not seen for so many years.

And it may be added that the young lady was so overjoyed, that she actually kissed both Sol and Pat, which act put Pat, at least for the moment, in a trance, as if an angel's wing had touched him in passing.

What followed can be briefly told.

Pat had never seen Dolan; hence, when the rascal stopped him in New York and hired him to deliver the letter, Pat read it, and discovered that it was a plan to entrap the Night Hawk Detective; so he got the boy to deliver the message, and hurried away on Dolan's trail.

Later in the day he had seen the trio leave the Brooklyn saloon, and had followed, which accounted for his being in at the rescue.

Pat made a full confession of how he had been tempted, and how he had lost the deed to Black Diamond farm, and was fully forgiven, but when Colonel Cook was searched, the document was found on his person.

So Ben Black was the arrant crook himself—the wily colonel.

Cook, Dolan and Mott Street Mag were taken back to New York, and in due time, were tried and sentenced to State's Prison, Mag being sent back to the convict institution from which she had escaped.

As soon as Dolan serves his time, he is "wanted" by Pennsylvania authorities, and will get another dose of justice.

Mr. Hayden and Capitola went home, accompanied by Pat. That their affairs were all straightened out, is a matter of course. Then the old farm was sold for a very large sum, which it was richly worth.

Sol received back his money with interest, and he and Captain Hayden formed a partnership, and went into business in the metropolis.

Pat is with them, and declares he will never entertain a dishonest thought again to the longest day he lives.

When Capitola finished her term at Vassar, there was a brilliant wedding, she becoming the happy wife of Solomon Sharpe, ex detective and junior partner in the well-known shipping house of Hayden and Sharpe.

THE END.

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